

THE ORIGIN AND FUNCTIONS  
OF THE AISLED TETRACONCH  
CHURCHES IN SYRIA  
AND NORTHERN MESOPOTAMIA

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The following study is substantially the same as a paper delivered at the Symposium on "Current Work in Medieval and Byzantine Studies," held at Dumbarton Oaks on 4 and 5 May 1972.

IN 1939, after the late William A. Campbell had partially excavated and had established the main lines of the aisled tetraconch at Mağaracik, the ancient Seleucia Pieria and the harbor of Antioch in North Syria, the building became known as the “martyrion” in the belief that it was designed to function as a memorial church in honor of some unknown saint (fig. 1).<sup>1</sup> Although the site yielded no inscriptions, relics, or other evidence to justify this assumption—Campbell was unable to complete his excavations—the building has continued to be called the martyrion, and this is the identification we find in the writings of André Grabar, one of the foremost specialists in the study of the functions of Late Antique, Early Christian, and Medieval architecture.<sup>2</sup>

The tetraconch at Seleucia Pieria is one of a half dozen monuments in Syria and northern Mesopotamia which share a number of salient characteristics: they have a centralized plan consisting of a square or rectangular space having at its corners L-shaped piers from which project curved columnar exedrae, while spacious ambulatories ring the central core (fig. 2); that is, they are double-shelled structures with a quatrefoil nucleus. Sometimes the perimeter walls repeat the shape of the inner quatrefoil; in other instances, they present a different configuration. All are large structures whose central spaces have sides measuring from about 10 to 13 m. Their elevations also are similar. Probably all were single-storied structures which had no galleries above the ambulatories and whose central space was covered either with a pyramidal roof or with a dome made of timber or other light-weight material, depending on local resources and building practices. One of the buildings is known to have been provided with an atrium, but none had a narthex; they featured projecting chancels or a series of chambers at the east end, depending on local liturgical requirements. Some were situated near other structures and were part of group formations. So many formal features do these structures have in common, and so specialized is the type, that they clearly belong to a single architectural family, an observation which is confirmed by their close geographical and chronological relationships. All were situated in cities of considerable importance and all were built within a seventy-five-year period, from about A.D. 460 to the second quarter of the sixth century.

The question arises whether they were designed to serve identical or different functions. Since in Early Christian and Medieval art identical forms often

<sup>1</sup> W. A. Campbell, “The Martyrion at Seleucia Pieria,” in *Antioch-on the-Orontes*, III, ed. R. Stillwell (Princeton, 1941), 35ff.

<sup>2</sup> A. Grabar, *Martyrium: Recherches sur le culte des reliques et l'art chrétien antique*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1943–46), II, 371; *idem*, *The Golden Age of Justinian from the Death of Theodosius to the Rise of Islam*, trans. S. Gilbert and J. Emmons (New York, 1967), 236. R. Krautheimer, in *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1965), 106, questions whether the building was built as a martyrion, while on p. 166 he states that it was “probably” dedicated to the Princes of the Apostles—an identification he now rejects (in personal correspondence, 1966) and which presumably he will clarify in the second edition of this book which is now in press.

assume different meanings or functions, it might be supposed that these buildings were invested with a variety of purposes. This is the point of view adopted by Richard Krautheimer regarding these buildings.<sup>3</sup> Grabar, on the other hand, has maintained that, with one exception, the tetraconchs known to him served as martyria which were erected to commemorate a site or shelter relics associated with the life or memory of a saint.<sup>4</sup> He applied this point of view to nearly all central-plan buildings of the Early Christian period and tried to establish their derivation from mausolea and *heroa*, common in Roman architecture throughout the Empire. Sustaining his theory of a close link between the function and the principal forms of religious structures, Grabar has expounded his thesis at length, and has found wide acceptance for it. Undoubtedly, his contribution is fundamental. I will deal here with the question of the functions for which the aisled tetraconchs in Syria and northern Mesopotamia were designed and will conclude by proposing a working hypothesis to explain why these buildings bear such close resemblance to one another.<sup>5</sup>

Campbell was surely correct in identifying the building at Seleucia Pieria as a church. The floor mosaics, revetments, baptistery, capitals bearing crosses, and U-shaped bema in the center bay taken together leave no doubt about that. While he proposed that the building was erected as a memorial church, he refrained from speculating on which saint was commemorated at the site. Both Andrew Keck and Glanville Downey once suggested that the church was built in honor of the virgin saint Thecla.<sup>6</sup> A shrine honoring St. Thecla at Seleucia Pieria is mentioned in an ambiguous passage of Theophanes, and in 1652 Patriarch Macarius of Antioch visited a shrine which was said to shelter her body.<sup>7</sup> But no Early Christian church in her memory is known to have been situated in the city, and there is no evidence at all of any association between her and the building excavated by Campbell. A large number of carved reliefs was found among the debris excavated by Campbell, and not one of these carvings can be said with certainty to represent St. Thecla. Her cult originated at Iconium and Seleucia (Silifke) in Isauria in the fourth century, and it is here rather than at Seleucia in Syria<sup>8</sup> that the Emperor Zeno built a church in her memory.

<sup>3</sup> Krautheimer, *Architecture*, 106, 166f.

<sup>4</sup> Grabar, *Martyrium*, I, 146, 187ff., and *passim*. He excepts the tetraconch at Amida (see *infra*, p. 107).

<sup>5</sup> These questions will be dealt with at length in my forthcoming monograph, *The Aisled Tetraconch*.

<sup>6</sup> G. Downey, *A History of Antioch in Syria from Seleucus to the Arab Conquest* (Princeton, 1961), 507 note 19; *idem*, in *Reallexikon zur byzantinischen Kunst*, I (1963), col. 186. A. Keck's suggestion is reported by Campbell, "Martyrion," 54.

<sup>7</sup> Theophanes, *Chronographia*, a. m. 5983 (=A.D. 491), ed. C. De Boor (Leipzig, 1883), I, 135; *Voyage du Patriarche Macaire d'Antioche*, Arabic text with French trans. B. Radu, *Patrologia Orientalis*, XXII, 1 (Paris, 1930), 71. J. Mécérian, *Expédition archéologique dans l'Antiochène occidentale* (Beirut, 1965), 31f., reports seeing the ruins of a "relatively recent" chapel of St. Thecla situated in a village between Antioch and Seleucia Pieria.

<sup>8</sup> *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Graeca*, 3d ed. (Brussels, 1957), II, 267ff.; *Acta Pauli et Theclae*, ed. R. A. Lipsius, in *Acta apostolorum apocrypha* (Leipzig, 1891).



Krautheimer once posited that the tetraconch was a martyrium in honor of the Princes of the Apostles.<sup>9</sup> The evidence for this identification is not specified but must have been based on one of the many marble reliefs found inside the church—a fragmentary low-relief plaque, which shows a man standing alongside a jewel-studded wreath (fig. 4). K. Weitzmann has identified this figure as St. Paul and assumes that, as its counterpart, there was on the other side of the wreath another figure, which he thought to have been St. Peter.<sup>10</sup> Thus the Princes of the Apostles would have been represented together on the plaque. This scene, however, is no indication of the function of the church. It does not differ in size or any physical characteristic from other incised plaques found on the site; its original location in the church remains unknown; and it is not even known whether it belongs to the original foundation or to its rebuilding, which Campbell assigned to just after the earthquake that wrecked Antioch and its vicinity in 526. Moreover, a dedication to St. Paul can be excluded on the grounds that another Early Christian church at Seleucia Pieria was built in his honor. On the last day of the excavations carried out by Princeton University the ruins of a small aisled basilica paved with mosaics came to light in the upper city; a panel in the north aisle of this structure had an inscription, hurriedly transcribed by Campbell, indicating that the church was erected “in honor of the apostle,” who, for this city, can be none other than St. Paul.<sup>11</sup>

The reliefs provide, on the other hand, suggestive evidence that the building was designed as a regular congregational church. In a martyrium we would expect to find images related to the life and miracles of the saint in whose honor it was erected, and this is not the case at Seleucia Pieria.<sup>12</sup> Here we encounter a variety of important biblical figures and scenes—there was certainly a New Testament cycle—which is characteristic of a church of more general function than a martyrium proper.

Lavishly adorned with costly materials, the tetraconch was surely a prominent ecclesiastical foundation. It was located in the lower city near the main colonnaded street, just a few meters from the so-called Market Gate, inside the Roman circuit walls. As at Rome, Ravenna, and elsewhere, the focus of Christian life was established on the periphery of the city. When the building was reconstructed in the sixth century, it was used for the celebration of the Eucharistic service, as is witnessed by the group of chambers, including a

<sup>9</sup> *Architecture*, 166. One of the fragmentary reliefs from the church represents a horseman and is inscribed ΣΑΟΥΛ (*Antioch-on-the-Orontes*, III, 99, no. 193, pl. 20, no. 391). This must be King Saul (*ibid.*, 139f.) rather than the apostle Paul “who also is called Saul.” On the belief that St. Paul changed his name from Saul on his conversion to Christianity, see now D. A. Sherlock, “Saul, Paul and the Silver Spoons from Sutton Hoo,” *Speculum*, 47 (1972), 91ff.

<sup>10</sup> K. Weitzmann, in *Antioch-on-the-Orontes*, III, 135, 140f., pl. 20, no. 395.

<sup>11</sup> As reported by D. Levi, *Antioch Mosaic Pavements* (Princeton, 1947), I, Text, 482 note 346. The pages in Campbell’s field notes on deposit at Princeton University that deal with this find were missing when I examined them in 1967.

<sup>12</sup> Compare St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Laudatio S. Theodori* (*Patrologia Graeca*, XLVI, col. 737), and Asterius of Amaseia’s account of paintings representing the martyrdom of St. Euphemia (ed. F. Halkin, 4ff.). Both texts are translated into English in C. Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312–1453* (Englewood Cliffs, 1972), 36ff.

baptistery, at its east end. Perhaps from the outset it was intended for regular congregational use. Having neither time nor permission to excavate the area surrounding the church, Campbell was unable to establish whether other structures existed in the immediate neighborhood.

The harbor city of the greatest metropolis in Roman Syria, Seleucia Pieria was exposed to Christianity at an early date. The bishopric of the city is attested as early as A.D. 359.<sup>13</sup> It formed part of Syria Prima in the Patriarchate of Antioch, and its bishops were styled "comprovincial archbishops" (ἀρχιεπίσκοποι ἐπαρχιώται).<sup>14</sup> In the year 459 it is called a metropolis for the first time. In the years following this event the tetraconch was erected. Its carved capitals exhibit windblown acanthus leaves and closely resemble capitals from the martyrion of St. Symeon Stylites at Qal'at Sim'an, which is generally assigned to the years from 459 to ca. 490, and in my opinion the style of the ambulatory pavements also points to such a dating.<sup>15</sup> Was the tetraconch built in response to the newly created ecclesiastical status of the city? This remains a possibility which deserves consideration.

One of the most conspicuous features in the planning of the church for liturgical purposes is the U-shaped bema some 15 m. in length which was set up at its center, on the longitudinal axis of the structure, facing west (fig. 2). Campbell assigned this architectural element to the sixth-century rebuilding of the church, but the archaeological remains can be interpreted to show that it was there from the beginning.<sup>16</sup> Syrian U-shaped bemas do not identify the function of their churches, for they occur in "cathedral churches," pilgrimage churches, and martyria—they are not known to be present in monastery churches—but they surely do not prove a connection with the cult of relics, as E. Baldwin Smith contended.<sup>17</sup> This kind of bema has been traced in at least thirty-two churches, of which all but three are in North Syria or Syria Prima, and all are in an area that was under the jurisdiction of the

<sup>13</sup> R. Devreesse, *Le Patriarcat d'Antioche* (Paris, 1945), 167f.

<sup>14</sup> E. Honigmann, "The Patriarchate of Antioch," *Traditio*, 5 (1947), 156; *idem*, *Evêques et évêchés monophysites d'Asie antérieure au VI<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, 127, Subsidia, 2 (Louvain, 1951), 29f.

<sup>15</sup> *Antioch-on-the-Orontes*, III, pl. 33, nos. 74–75; R. Kautzsch, *Kapitellstudien* (Berlin and Leipzig, 1936), 143, pl. 28, no. 460. The mosaics, from the outset part of the building's decoration, are more difficult to date than the capitals. In my opinion they too belong to the late fifth century. Compare a pavement dated by an inscription to A.D. 473 at Serdjilla: F. I. Uspenskij, in *Izvestija Russkogo Arheologičeskogo Instituta v Konstantinopole*, 7 (1902), 155ff., pls. 27–28; a destroyed pavement in a church at Ayas in Cilicia: M. Gough, in *Anatolian Studies*, 4 (1954), 49ff., pls. v–vi; and the mosaic from the Worcester Hunt at Antioch which is attributed to ca. 500: Levi, *Pavements*, I, 588; II, pls. xc, clxxvi, b, clxxvii. E. Kitinger, in the discussion following the presentation of this paper at the Dumbarton Oaks Symposium, drew attention to the early sixth-century dating of the mosaics maintained by Levi and others.

<sup>16</sup> Campbell was inclined to regard it as an addition set up during the first reconstruction of the church because the marble pavement around the bema foundations was irregular and had broken edges, but the plan and photograph of the bema which he published suggest that the pavement is irregular only where a half-column, or base, was let into its south wall, and he reported no difference between the foundations of the bema and those of the other walls of the church. See *Antioch-on-the-Orontes*, III, 46, fig. 63, plan x. Since the church site today is a malarial swamp, it is impossible to recheck these critical observations.

<sup>17</sup> E. B. Smith, *The Dome* (Princeton, 1950), 132.

Patriarchate of Antioch.<sup>18</sup> None has been discovered in South Syria, northern Mesopotamia, or the Caucasian principalities of the Empire. With two exceptions, none of the Syrian sites with a church containing a U-shaped bema were episcopal sees, and these two are worthy of note: Seleucia Pieria and Rusafah. Aisled tetraconchs stood at both of these sites.

At Rusafah, however, the bema is found not in the tetraconch but in Basilica A. When in 1907 the tetraconch was discovered in this frontier garrison town near the Euphrates, it was called the martyrium of St. Sergius;<sup>19</sup> but the recent campaigns conducted at Rusafah by a German mission headed by Johannes Kollwitz have led to fresh discoveries and made it necessary to re-identify its principal churches.<sup>20</sup> Three large churches have been cleared and excavated inside the impressive circuit walls—Basilica A, Basilica B, and the tetraconch (fig. 3).

Basilica A, which contained the bema, was founded about the year 500, as its carved ornament indicates.<sup>21</sup> It is the largest of the three churches *intra muros* and is accompanied by adjacent structures, which suggested to Kollwitz the possibility that this complex served as a monastery, perhaps the one which was presided over by the local Bishop Joseph around the middle of the sixth century. Slightly smaller than Basilica A is Basilica B, which Kollwitz attributes to the late fifth century and convincingly identifies as the renowned pilgrimage church of St. Sergius, after whom the town was renamed by the Emperor Anastasius.<sup>22</sup> The evidence for this identification is provided by the planning of the eastern end of the church. In the pavement of the central apse were found the marks left by a large altar table (2.24 by 1.69 m.) used for the celebration of the liturgy. To the south of the apse are two chambers, the first of which, perhaps a diaconicon, opens into the second, which has an apse projecting from its eastern wall. This chamber sheltered a sarcophagus which was used possibly for the founder of the church whose identity remains unknown. To the north of the apse is a large chamber which communicates directly with both the apse and the northern aisle and off of which fan three small apses in the form of a triconch.<sup>23</sup> The triconch was sumptuously decorated, far more so than the rest of the building: it had *opus sectile* pavements, painted carved ornament, and mosaics with gold tesserae in the semi-domes of the apses. A reliquary sarcophagus once stood in the eastern conch, suggesting that the chamber served as a martyrium chapel. This possibility is reinforced

<sup>18</sup> For the problem of the Syrian bema, R. F. Taft, "Some Notes on the Bema in the East and West Syrian Traditions," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, 34 (1968), 326ff., with full bibliography.

<sup>19</sup> F. Sarre, in *Monatshefte für Kunstwissenschaft*, 2 (1909), 95ff.; F. Sarre and E. Herzfeld, *Archäologische Reise im Euphrat- und Tigris-Gebiet*, 4 vols. (Berlin, 1911–20), I, 136ff.; II, 1ff. (by S. Guyer).

<sup>20</sup> J. Kollwitz, "Die Grabungen in Resafa," *Neue deutsche Ausgrabungen im Mittelmeergebiet und im vorderen Orient* (Berlin, 1959), 45ff.; *idem*, in *Archäologischer Anzeiger*, 1963, col. 328ff.; *idem*, in *Annales Archéologiques de Syrie*, 14 (1964), 75ff.

<sup>21</sup> Kollwitz, "Die Grabungen in Resafa," 60ff., figs. 11–16.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 53ff., figs. 5–10. The carved ornament of the eastern sanctuary was added in the time of the Emperor Justinian.

<sup>23</sup> J. Kollwitz, in *AA*, 1954 (publ. 1955), col. 125f., fig. 3; *idem*, in *AA*, 1957 (publ. 1958), col. 70ff., figs. 2–7.

by the square chamber which opens off the triconch, a subsequent addition to the building. In a niche placed in the eastern wall of this chamber a reliquary sarcophagus was discovered which rested on a ledge having a cavity for the accumulation of the excess of libations poured by pilgrims into a rectangular hollow space in the sarcophagus itself. The reliquary may have commemorated St. Bacchus and served as a pendant to that in the triconch, which would have honored St. Sergius. A graffito near the doorway of one of the lateral chambers of the church names Leontius, the martyr of Tripolis whose cult became connected to that of the Sts. Sergius and Bacchus and enjoyed popularity in sixth-century Syria.<sup>24</sup> In all likelihood Basilica B served as the pilgrimage martyrium of St. Sergius.

We can therefore dismiss the former identification of the tetraconch at Rusafah as the martyrium of the famed military saint, a point of view which was prompted largely by the assumption that all centralized buildings of the early Christian period functioned as martyria. The remains of the tetraconch have been thoroughly cleared of debris and excavated, and not a shred of evidence of relics, inscriptions, or pilgrims' *ampullae* which would support such an identification has come to light.<sup>25</sup> The building was designed for other purposes.

The principal entrance to the city was situated in the northern side of its surrounding walls, and the tetraconch is closer to this gate than are the other two churches *intra muros*. It is the first which was approached by pilgrims and other visitors entering the walled city as they proceeded along the main colonnaded street from the north gate toward the southern sector (fig. 5). A large structure, some 42 by 34 m., only slightly smaller than Basilica A and Basilica B, it was erected near a pre-existing residential complex of the Late Antique period which extended along the western flank of the colonnaded street. The tetraconch was built on the other side of the street on a slight eminence and was itself surrounded by a wall, like a *temenos*. Two tetrapyla framed the colonnaded walls in front of the small courtyard to the west of the tetraconch and, creating a monumental façade, proclaimed the prominence and dignity of the spacious structure behind them.

The planning of the tetraconch for liturgical use has been traced in detail and furnishes substantial proof that the building was designed as a cathedral. Behind a straight parapet screen on the raised chancel there was a stepped synthronon with a central platform for an episcopal throne, and the marks left by the four legs of an altar table were found in front of the synthronon, at the springing of the apse.<sup>26</sup> From the outset a baptismal font was situated in the chamber to the north of the apse, and at some later period another chamber (*consignatorium*?) was attached to the baptistery, and this indicates an increasing number of initiates entering the faith.

<sup>24</sup> *Idem*, in *AA*, 1957, col. 77.

<sup>25</sup> An encolpion (?) whose lid is inscribed with the name of Sergius was found in the building: Kollwitz, in *AA*, 1963, col. 357ff., fig. 20.

<sup>26</sup> Grabar, *Martyrium*, II, 372, identifies the tetraconch as the martyrium of St. Sergius but observes that the eastern apse reflects planning for the ritual of the Eucharist.

Baptisteries usually—though not always—imply cathedrals, particularly in the Eastern Mediterranean, and this is where the parish priest performed the sacrament of baptism. In the fourth century, baptisteries were a regular part of cathedrals both in the Latin West and the Greek East, and their presence in or adjoining a church identifies it as a cathedral. The Basilica Costantiniana at Rome, S. Tecla at Milan, and the complex on Golgotha at Jerusalem come to mind.<sup>27</sup> By the fifth century, however, baptisteries also adjoined many a congregational church, rural as well as urban. At Rome they occur in the churches of S. Maria Maggiore, S. Crisogono, and S. Vitale, and as many as three baptisteries have turned up in some North African towns.<sup>28</sup> In Early Christian Syria the situation is analogous. In the Djebel Sim'an, which lies to the north of the road linking Antioch and Aleppo, a number of churches had them, although these churches did not serve as cathedrals.<sup>29</sup> The so-called cathedral at Brad is a case in point. In this region there are baptisteries in three or four towns within a radius of about nine kilometers.<sup>30</sup> In two instances a couple of baptisteries exist in a single town or village. Each of these places was not a *polis* but a village or parish, and was under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of a *chorepiskopos* or parish priest rather than a bishop proper.<sup>31</sup> Since "cathedral" is a *terminus technicus* referring to a bishop's church, these North Syrian buildings should not be designated as such, as they are in the publications of Butler and Beyer.

At Rusafah, however, the only baptistery that has come to light is situated in the tetraconch, and had the town been provided with a cathedral it would have been this building.

The residential quarters across the street from the tetraconch may have housed the local bishop and served as his administrative headquarters, as Kollwitz has suggested. The wall above the sarcophagus niche in the northern ambulatory of the tetraconch bears an inscription mentioning the name of a certain Abraham. If the name does not belong to a Syrian martyr, it may refer to the bishop of Rusafah who attended the second general Council of Constantinople in 553, *Abrahamus Sergiopolis metropolitanae civitatis*.<sup>32</sup> If this is correct, the tetraconch also functioned as an episcopal funerary church, though not necessarily from the outset.

<sup>27</sup> For the baptistery on Golgotha, see *Itinerarium Burdigalense*, ed. P. Geyer and O. Cuntz, *Corpus Christianorum*, Series Latina, CLXXV (Turnhout, 1965), 171.

<sup>28</sup> For Rome: A. Schuchert, *S. Maria Maggiore zu Rom* (Vatican City, 1939), 13ff.; R. Krautheimer, *Corpus Basilicarum Christianarum Romae* (Vatican City, 1937ff.), I, 152, 159, 163; IV, 314. For North Africa: J. B. Ward Perkins and R. Goodchild, "The Christian Antiquities of Tripolitania," *Archaeologia*, 93 (1953), 7, 18, 24, 28, 31. Cf. D. Claude, *Die byzantinische Stadt im 6. Jahrhundert* (Munich, 1969), 91f., on the importance of baptisteries in North Africa.

<sup>29</sup> H. C. Butler, *Early Churches in Syria*, ed. E. B. Smith (Princeton, 1929), 34ff.; J. Lassus, *Sanctuaires chrétiens de Syrie* (Paris, 1947), 168ff.

<sup>30</sup> Butler, *op. cit.*, 152.

<sup>31</sup> See an inscription from Brad: *Inscriptions Grecques et Latines de la Syrie*, ed. L. Jalabert and R. Mousterde (Paris, 1929ff.), II, no. 530.

<sup>32</sup> G. Tchalenko, *Villages antiques de la Syrie du Nord; Le massif du Bélus à l'époque romaine*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1953–58), II, pl. CXLVIII, no. 37. For this Abraham, cf. J. Harduin, *Conciliorum collectio regia maxima* . . . (Paris, 1715), III, 203.

In short, it is highly likely that the tetraconch was designed to be the cathedral of Rusafah, and served as an episcopal residential church and an episcopal burial place. Significantly, it was erected in the 520's, judging by its magnificent carved ornament,<sup>33</sup> or soon after the city was promoted from a bishopric to a metropolis.<sup>34</sup> This event may well be the *raison d'être* for the construction of the building since a splendid church worthy of the new authority and dignity of the metropolitan was called for. In the *Notitia Antiochena* of ca. 570, five suffragans, presumably appointed by the Emperor Anastasius, are listed as dependent upon the diocese of Rusafah-Sergiopolis.<sup>35</sup> Functionally, therefore, the tetraconch served as a diocesan church as well.

Analogous functions pertained to the aisled tetraconch at Apamea (the modern Qal'at-el-Mudiq), which is currently being excavated by a Belgian expedition headed by Jean Balty (fig. 6).<sup>36</sup> This building is situated in the southeast quarter of the walled city, near the main, east gate, which leads to Palmyra, and it opened off the spacious *decumanus maximus*, which was colonnaded and whose walls were decorated with paintings. A spacious vestibule paved with mosaics opened from the street into a huge rectangular courtyard (ca. 34 by 36 m.) with a fountain at its center and, along its eastern flank, a range of chambers of various sizes which show traces of subsequent Arab settlement and structural reconditioning. The south end of the courtyard is occupied by the tetraconch, an impressive edifice some 48 m. in diameter which lies exactly parallel to the *decumanus maximus* but which is not aligned on the axis running from this street to the courtyard. Not much of the area between the *decumanus maximus* and the tetraconch has been cleared, though in the first excavations at the site, made by F. Mayence in the 1930's, a small colonnaded quadriporticus was traced to the west of the tetraconch. The chronological relationship of the quadriporticus and the tetraconch is yet to be studied.

The complex belongs to several building periods, from Roman, Early Christian, and Arab times. The tetraconch was erected on the remains of a Roman structure of unknown function, some of whose floor mosaics survive thus supplying a *terminus post quem*, namely, the end of the fourth century, for the tetraconch.<sup>37</sup> Incorporating four huge piers from this early structure, the center bay of the tetraconch featured curved columnar exedrae on three sides, and to the east a solid continuous wall of undetermined height. As at Rusafah, the eastern conch sheltered a synthronon, a *cathedra*, and, on the

<sup>33</sup> The carved ornament is matched by that in the city walls and is paralleled at Amida and Nisibis: *AA*, 1954 (publ. 1955), col. 129f., figs. 7-8; Kautzsch, *Kapitellstudien*, 140, 146, 195, 215ff., pl. 28, nos. 453, 456; S. Guyer, "Amida," *Repertorium für Kunstwissenschaft*, 38 (1916), 214f.

<sup>34</sup> A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire, 284-602* (Oxford, 1964), 883 note 11.

<sup>35</sup> *Notitiae Graecae Episcopatum*, ed. G. Parthey (Berlin, 1866), no. 5, p. 142; Honigsmann, *Evêques*, 102f.

<sup>36</sup> For preliminary reports on the current campaigns, J. and J. C. Balty and M. Dewez, *Belgian Archaeological Research on a Site in Syria: Apamea on the Orontes*, pamphlet no. 120 of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Brussels, 1970). I am grateful to Jean Balty for the plan published here. For a more recent plan, see *infra*, note 37a.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 50; G. M. A. Hanfmann, "Socrates and Christ," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, 60 (1951), 205ff.

chord of the exedra, a large altar table. Synthrona have appeared in other Apamene churches, but the tetraconch is the only church in the city to have both a synthronon and a *cathedra*.

Excavations carried out in 1970–71 to the southeast of the tetraconch brought to light a suite of rooms including a baptistery. Just to the east of the chancel of the tetraconch was found a baptismal font in a semicircular niche, with water pipes and drains, and other niches for the storing of oil bottles to be used for the final unction of the catechumens before baptism. The catechumens entered the baptismal complex through a separate entrance let into the southeastern enclosure walls of the church grounds.<sup>37a</sup> Together, these various provisions of the tetraconch furnish nearly hard proof that the church was originally designed as the local cathedral.

Immediately to the west of the tetraconch lie the ruins of an imposing double-storied complex, which has been attributed to the fourth century A.D. and which was enlarged and remodeled in the following two centuries (fig. 7).<sup>38</sup> The Belgians identify this lavishly decorated complex with the residence of an important imperial official, and, at least from the fifth century, of the governor of Syria Secunda himself.<sup>39</sup> While these quarters occupied one insula, the tetraconch group occupied two and was presumably as, if not more, important than its neighbor; further, the focal point of the larger complex was the tetraconch itself.

A large and prominent Hellenized urban center in the Empire, and in Syria second only to its sister city Antioch, Apamea became a bishopric by the early fourth century.<sup>40</sup> In the following century it began to receive its share of martyrs and relics, and sometime during the first half of the century was promoted to the rank of metropolis, the head of the Church in the ecclesiastical province of Syria Secunda.<sup>41</sup> This province embraced such localities as Larissa, Epiphaneia, Arethusa, Raphanaeae, Mariamme, and Balaneae.<sup>42</sup> The see itself was accountable to the Patriarchate of Antioch, as were the metropoleis of Seleucia Pieria and Rusafah. Not more than about fifty years later, and perhaps only shortly after its ecclesiastical promotion, the tetraconch was built, and there may be a connection between the two events. Perhaps the tetraconch was designed as the metropolitan church of the province and served simultaneously as cathedral and as diocesan headquarters.

<sup>37a</sup> J. C. Balty, "Nouvelles mosaïques païennes et groupe épiscopal dit 'cathédrale de l'est' à Apamée de Syrie," *Comptes-rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, 1972, 103 ff. and plan following 108.

<sup>38</sup> V. Verhoogen, *Apamée de Syrie aux Musées royaux d'art et d'histoire* (Brussels, 1964), figs. 21–24, pl. v; J. Balty, *La grande mosaïque de chasse du triclinos* (Brussels, 1969).

<sup>39</sup> Balty and Dewez, *op. cit.*, 43, 48; J. C. Balty, "L'édifice 'au triclinos'," in *Colloque Apamée de Syrie: Bilan des recherches archéologiques 1965–1968* (Brussels, 1969), 62, fig. 1.

<sup>40</sup> Devreesse, *Patriarcat*, 179 ff.

<sup>41</sup> Malalas (Bonn ed., 365) reports that under the Emperor Theodosius II (408–50) Coele-Syria was partitioned into Syria Prima and Syria Secunda, with Apamea as the capital and metropolitan of the latter. The ecclesiastical province of Syria Secunda was presumably created at the same time, for in the later Roman Empire the boundaries of the civil and ecclesiastical provinces usually coincided, and this appears to have been true in the case of Syria Secunda. Cf. Devreesse, *Patriarcat*, 122 note 2, 133; Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, 881, 911.

<sup>42</sup> Balty and Dewez, *op. cit.*, fig. 3.

Balty, the present excavator of the building site, has advanced the hypothesis that the church was laid out as a martyrium which preserved a precious fragment of the True Cross.<sup>43</sup> Procopius relates how this relic was employed when Chosroes visited Apamea in A.D. 540 and how its display saved the city from pillage and destruction by the Persians.<sup>44</sup> We hear of this relic again in connection with an earthquake at Constantinople after which the Emperor Justin II sent for it in the hope that it would protect the imperial city from further damage. Not without difficulty the relic was removed from Apamea and translated to Antioch, where it was sawn in two lengthwise, so that one piece could be sent to the Emperor and the other returned to its original location.<sup>45</sup>

The Byzantine and Arabic sources recounting these events fail to specify the exact whereabouts of the relic at Apamea, and thus Balty's hypothesis cannot be proved. But relics were conserved in the church, for a marble reliquary was discovered by Mayence in the debris of the building and has been tentatively attributed to the sixth century. It bears an inscription mentioning the names of Saints Jude, Callinicus, John the Soldier, and the Forty Martyrs (of Sebaste?).<sup>46</sup>

Surely, by the sixth century the cult of relics was widespread and reliquaries must have been housed in many urban churches in the Mediterranean basin. As for the large piece of the True Cross, we recall that Cyril of Jerusalem reports that in his day relics of the Cross "almost filled the whole world."<sup>47</sup> The preservation of a relic in a church does not *ipso facto* identify that church as a martyrium proper.

To support his hypothesis about the relic Balty has drawn attention to an inscription which he discovered in 1970 in the propylon leading from the *decumanus maximus* to the courtyard north of the tetraconch.<sup>48</sup> This inscription refers to a certain Paul, whom Balty identifies as the local bishop who addressed a letter to the Emperor Justinian in 536.<sup>49</sup> It bears a date which he transcribes as the year 533, its damaged condition notwithstanding. On this basis he assigns the construction of the tetraconch to the second quarter of the sixth century, which corresponds to the time we first hear of the relic at Apamea. But the floor mosaics found by Mayence in the southwestern ambulatory of the tetraconch appear to belong to the original structure, and on the grounds of their style can be safely attributed to the third quarter of the fifth century, or *ca.* 460.<sup>50</sup> Since the inscription found by Balty occurs in the pave-

<sup>43</sup> J. and J. C. Balty, "Le cadre topographique et historique," in *Colloque Apamée*, 39 ff.

<sup>44</sup> Procopius, *Bellum Persicum*, II, xi, 14 ff.

<sup>45</sup> *Chronique de Michel le Syrien*, X, 1 (ed. and trans. J. B. Chabot, 3 vols. [Paris, 1901], II, 285). Cf. A. Frolow, *La relique de la Vraie Croix* (Paris, 1961), 184 f.; *idem*, *Les reliquaires de la Vraie Croix* (Paris, 1965), 22, 27, 56.

<sup>46</sup> Verhoogen, *Apamée*, fig. 18; *IGLSyr*, IV, ed. L. Jalabert and R. Mouterde, no. 1343; H. Delehay, "Saints et reliquaires d'Apamée," *Analecta Bollandiana*, 53 (1935), 225 ff., in particular 237 ff.

<sup>47</sup> *Catecheses*, IV, 10; X, 19; XIII, 4 (PG, XXXIII, cols. 469, 688, 776).

<sup>48</sup> Personal communication (1970).

<sup>49</sup> Devreesse, *Patriarcat*, 181.

<sup>50</sup> Verhoogen, *Apamée*, fig. 13. Compare the floor mosaics of the third quarter of the fifth century in the church at Khaldé in Lebanon: M. Chéhab, *Mosaïques du Liban* (= *Bulletin du Musée de Bey-*



ment of the monumental vestibule and does not mention the tetraconch, it may belong to a period of rebuilding of the Christian complex rather than to its original construction. If Balty's identification of this Paul is correct, we are afforded evidence of interest in the site on the part of the local episcopacy, and perhaps a clue to its original function as a cathedral church.

The church at Apamea is an exact parallel of the tetraconch at Seleucia Pieria. Both feature large projecting eastern chancels; the exterior of their perimeter walls was ornamented with engaged columns on bases; figural mosaics covered their ambulatories. These close formal resemblances correspond to the functional usage of the two churches and emphasize their erection within a quarter of a century of each other. There is no historical evidence, however, tying the one directly to the other and thus suggesting that they stem from a common model.

The prayer hall of the Madrasa al-Halawiyya at Aleppo (ancient Beroia; Halab in Arabic) in North Syria may preserve parts of an aisled tetraconch (fig. 8). Situated near the Great Mosque of the city, the Halawiyya comprises a courtyard and a prayer hall, in which are preserved the remains of a structure of Early Christian date.<sup>51</sup> About 10 m. on a side in the clear, the square center space of the prayer hall is marked off by L-shaped piers in whose corners are free-standing marble columns. On its western side, six marble columns are arranged in a semicircle (fig. 10).

The combination of these features is highly interesting, but until an archaeological investigation of the site is made we cannot be certain whether any of the surrounding walls of the hall are contemporary with the square core or are of later date.<sup>52</sup> Thus, the problem of the form of the structure to which the square core originally belonged arises. A number of tentative restorations have been proposed, the most plausible of which is that put forward by Ecochard, which has been accepted in principle by Lassus and Krautheimer.<sup>53</sup> According to Ecochard, these surviving remains belonged to an aisled tetraconch resembling the cathedral of Bosra (fig. 9). Columnar exedrae billowed out from all four sides of the center bay and were surrounded by ambulatories. The Syrian writer Ibn Shihna (d. 1485), who compiled his *Perles choisies*

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*routh*, 14, Text; 15, Plates) (Paris, 1958-59), 107, pl. LXIII. When the tetraconch was first excavated by Mayence some capitals were unearthed, but they do not seem to belong to the original church: F. Mayence, in *L'Antiquité Classique*, 4 (1935), 202, figs. 7-8. Cf. Kautzsch, *Kapitellstudien*, 105, pl. 19, nos. 291, 295; *Antioch-on-the-Orontes*, III, 152, pl. 31, nos. 14-15.

<sup>51</sup> M. van Berchem and J. Strzygowski, *Amida* (Heidelberg, 1910), 199ff., figs. 116-18; S. Guyer, "La Madrasa al-Halawiyya à Alep," *Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale*, 11 (1914), 217ff.; J. Sauvaget, *Alep. Essai sur le développement d'une grande ville syrienne, des origines au milieu du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1941), 59f., pl. ix, 1.

<sup>52</sup> Some of these walls were thought to be part of the original building by E. Herzfeld; cf. his *Matériaux pour un Corpus Inscriptionum Arabicarum. Deuxième partie: Syrie du nord, Inscriptions et monuments d'Alep*, 2 sec. in 3 vols., Mémoires de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale du Caire, 76-78 (Cairo, 1954-56). The Halawiyya is discussed in vol. I of this work (text), 205ff., and illustrated in plates vol., pls. LII, LXXXII-LXXXV.

<sup>53</sup> M. Ecochard, "Note sur un édifice chrétien d'Alep," *Syria*, 27 (1950), 270ff. Cf. Lassus, *Sanctuaires*, 153, 262; Krautheimer, *Architecture*, 106, 166.

from various firsthand accounts on Aleppo and other cities, reports that the mosque of the Halawiyya once belonged to a larger building, which extended for an unspecified distance to the east.<sup>54</sup> He quotes the Syrian author of topographical and historical works Ibn Shaddad (d. 1285), who recounts that "à cet emplacement était le chœur [*bait al-madhbah*] de l'église transformée en collège al-Ḥalāwiyya. Par des passages souterrains voûtés, on pouvait se rendre du chœur au *haikal*."<sup>55</sup> Ecochard maintains that the "passages souterrains voûtés" describe ambulatories ringing the center space of the church, but this remains in fact uncertain, and Ibn Shihna and Ibn Shaddad provide little that may serve for a restoration of the form of the original structure. A tetraconch, however, can be inferred from the existence of the columns in the corners of the L-shaped piers and the six columns in the western curved exedra, an arrangement paralleled by the tetraconch at Apamea.

Ecochard's hypothesis is enhanced by the original function of the building, in so far as it can be deduced from Arabic sources. These sources agree in that the Halawiyya occupies the site of the pre-Islamic cathedral of Aleppo. Citing Ibn Shaddad, Ibn Shihna reports of "les sanctuaires chrétiens d'Alep" that "Ibn Shaddād parle de plus de 70 *haikal*, c'est-à-dire temples avec l'image de Miryam.—Le *haikal al-a'zam* était dans l'église cathédrale [*al-kanīsa al-kubrā*], qui est située en face de la porte occidentale de la grande Mosquée; elle est la plus grande église, bâtie par Hélène, mère de Constantin, tenue en grande vénération."<sup>56</sup> He adds: "les musulmans, au temps de la conquête, acquièrent par traité avec les habitants un terrain pour la grande Mosquée. La place occupée par la grande Mosquée était à l'époque byzantine un jardin [*boustan*] appartenant à la cathédrale, dont la fondation était attribuée à Hélène, mère de Constantin, fondateur de Constantinople."<sup>57</sup>

Evidently preserving a tradition of some antiquity, these and other Arabic sources identify only this site as the Christian cathedral among some seventy sanctuaries which are said to have been situated both within and without the walls of Aleppo. The building was put up in the heart of the Hellenized urban city and stood near the main (possibly colonnaded) street, which traversed it from the monumental Gate of Antioch (Bab Antakiya), at about the middle of the western side of the walls, to the acropolis and citadel on the eastern side (fig. 11). Archaeological and literary evidence confirms that the site of the Halawiyya has always represented an important center in the history of Aleppo.<sup>58</sup> Of this building the *Perles choisies* relates that "au début [il] avait été un temple des adorateurs du feu, puis [il] passa aux juifs qui y venaient en pèlerinage, puis aux chrétiens, enfin aux musulmans."<sup>59</sup> No remains of a pagan temple have been unearthed at the Halawiyya, though Hittite basalt

<sup>54</sup> J. Sauvaget, "Les *Perles choisies*" d'Ibn ach-Chihna: *Matériaux pour servir à l'histoire de la ville d'Alep*, 2 vols. (Beirut, 1933), I, 83.

<sup>55</sup> Herzfeld, *Matériaux*, I, 206 note 1. Cf. Sauvaget's rendering of the same passage: *Perles*, 83.

<sup>56</sup> Trans. Herzfeld, *Matériaux*, I, 205. Cf. Sauvaget, *Perles*, 82.

<sup>57</sup> Trans. Herzfeld, *Matériaux*, I, 143. Cf. Sauvaget, *Perles*, 61.

<sup>58</sup> Sauvaget, *Alep*, I, 47ff.

<sup>59</sup> Herzfeld, *Matériaux*, I, 205.

sculptures have come to light in the (later) court of the Great Mosque standing to the east of the Halawiyya; the area eventually passed into the custody of the Christian community, which erected its principal congregational church on the site, evidently a parcel of land of considerable extent. As for indications of its having been planned for the purpose of conducting liturgical services, Ibn Shaddad suggests that an episcopal throne was placed inside the church ("une chaire de marbre blanc, haute de 11 aunes") and that the building housed a magnificent treasure.<sup>60</sup> Implication of a baptistery is also preserved in the Arabic sources.<sup>61</sup>

From the beginning of the fourth century Aleppo was an important Christian center in Syria Prima, where a considerable number of ecclesiastical edifices was built. At the Council of Constantinople in 536 Aleppo was promoted to the rank of metropolis, and in the *Notitia Antiochena* the local bishop is designated as the first *syncellus* of the Patriarch of Antioch.<sup>62</sup> The new ecclesiastical rank was created after the cathedral was erected, since the carved ornament in its square bay appears related to, and later in date than, the capitals at Qal'at Sim'an and Seleucia Pieria, suggesting that the present structure was founded at the beginning of the sixth century.<sup>63</sup> This church perhaps replaced an earlier cathedral, which is attributed by Arabic sources to the Empress Mother Helena. A "Great Church" and an *episkopeion* stood at Aleppo as early as *ca.* A.D. 400, when Bishop Acacius occupied the see.<sup>64</sup> The new cathedral survived intact until 1124, when the *kadi* Ibn al-Khashshab transformed it into a mosque as a reprisal for atrocities committed by the crusaders, who desecrated and destroyed Moslem tombs outside the city walls: "lorsque le qādī en fut averti, il désaffecta les quatre églises chrétiennes *intra muros* et les transforma en mosquées, en y mettant des niches à prière. L'une d'elles était la cathédrale, désormais appelée *masdjid al-Sarrādjīn*, mosquée des selliers: c'est la *Halāwiyya* de nos jours. Cela dura jusqu'au règne de Nūr al-dīn."<sup>65</sup> Thus, shortly after the church was turned into a mosque, the area on which it stood was converted by Nur al-Din (Mahmud) into a *madrasa*, of which the square building now serves as a prayer hall. Its new function illustrates the general rule of the continuity of places of worship in the ancient and medieval world and, in this particular case, is an example of the triumph of Islam over the Cross.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 206. Cf. Sauvaget, *Perles*, 84. For the church treasure, which included a marble altar from Apamea, see Ibn Shaddad, trans. Herzfeld, *Matériaux*, I, 208.

<sup>61</sup> Ibn Shihna citing Ibn Shaddad, trans. Herzfeld, *Matériaux*, I, 206 note 1: "le bain [*hammam*] de Maughan était le bain du *haikal*." Ibn Shaddad also mentions a "bassin en marbre blanc, vaste et beau," which was placed in the courtyard of the Great Mosque at Aleppo, and adds that "l'on suppose avoir été l'autel d'une des anciennes églises d'Alep" (*ibid.*, 143). "Autel" may indicate a baptismal font (*ibid.*, 143 note 4).

<sup>62</sup> Devreesse, *Patriarchat*, 121 f.; Honigsmann, "Patriarchate," 156.

<sup>63</sup> For the capitals: Guyer, "Madrasa," 219 ff.; Kautzsch, *Kapitellstudien*, 145, no. 463; E. Weigand, in *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, 23 (1914-19), 201. For the profiles of the moldings: H. C. Butler, *Architecture and Other Arts* (New York, 1903), 38 ff.

<sup>64</sup> Sozomen, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, VII, xxviii (PG, LXVII, col. 1504).

<sup>65</sup> Ibn Shaddad, trans. Herzfeld, *Matériaux*, I, 206. Cf. Sauvaget, *Perles*, 83; *idem*, *Alep*, I, 122 note 397, 127.

The Meryem Ana Kilisesi, Jacobite el-Adhra or church of the Virgin, at Amida (Diyarbakr) in northern Mesopotamia (eastern Turkey), may also mark the spot of an Early Christian aisled tetraconch.<sup>66</sup> One of two buildings in the city which continue to function as Christian churches, the present structure once projected from the eastern end of a large building of tetraconch plan, of which some stretches of walls have been discovered (fig. 12). About 48 m. in diameter, this structure must have featured interior supports, but no evidence of them has survived. These supporting elements may have displayed the same arrangement found in the oval octagon defined by the central piers of the huge church (now destroyed) at Viranşehir,<sup>67</sup> or, as Guyer proposed, a trefoil plan with three curved columnar exedrae, recalling the tetraconch church at Rusafah (fig. 5).<sup>68</sup> Guyer's suggestion is attractive, but excavations are required for confirmation. Little can be said about the upper parts of the building except that the perimeter walls appear structurally insufficient to have carried galleries; so a single-storied edifice may be tentatively envisaged. Smith's proposal that the center bay was capped by a dome has no foundation in fact.<sup>69</sup> The preserved capitals appear to be sixth century.<sup>70</sup>

The church of the Virgin is the largest known in Early Christian Amida and represented an important foundation. Evidence for determining its precise ecclesiastical functions is scarce and dates from a late period but points to a cathedral church, episcopal residence and burial place, and diocesan headquarters.

From the middle of the eleventh century until the early twentieth the local Jacobite bishop officiated in the church and resided in an adjoining building, whose site may be that occupied by the spacious two-storied dwelling situated to the south of the present church.<sup>71</sup> Local tradition maintains that this church once was part of a large complex extending for some 150 m. to the surrounding walls, and, while this ensemble is identified as a Syrian monastery, it may initially have covered less ground and have served as a general administrative center for the local bishop and his staff (no. 10 in fig. 13).<sup>72</sup> Evidence of episcopal tombs inside the church stems from the Middle Byzantine period and also suggests a funerary use.<sup>73</sup> A well stands in front of the modern sanc-

<sup>66</sup> S. Guyer, "Reisen in Mesopotamien," in *A. Petermann's Geographische Mitteilungen*, 62 (1916), 168 ff.; *idem*, *Meine Tigrisfahrt auf dem Floß nach den Ruinenstätten Mesopotamiens* (Berlin, 1923), 83 ff. A plan by Guyer first appeared in Sarre and Herzfeld, *Reise*, II, fig. 149. Based on studies carried out in 1910 and 1911, this plan supplanted the circular restoration of the church which had been posited by Gertrude Bell, who had visited the site in 1909, as reported and illustrated in van Berchem and Strzygowski, *Amida*, 187 ff. The recent work at the site by a mission directed by Jules Leroy remains unpublished: see Leroy's comments in *CRAI*, 1967, 324 ff.; 1968, 478 ff.

<sup>67</sup> J. Strzygowski, *Kleinasiens* (Leipzig, 1903), 96 ff., figs. 68-70; van Berchem and Strzygowski, *Amida*, 220, figs. 135, 283.

<sup>68</sup> See note 66. Cf. Smith, *Dome*, 119 f., fig. 185; Lassus, *Sanctuaires*, 154, fig. 70.

<sup>69</sup> Smith, *Dome*, fig. 185.

<sup>70</sup> Kautzsch, *Kapitellstudien*, 215 ff.; van Berchem and Strzygowski, *Amida*, fig. 110, pl. xxii. For the parallels at Rusafah, see *AA*, 1954 (publ. 1955), 133 f., fig. 11.

<sup>71</sup> O. H. Parry, *Six Months in a Syrian Monastery* (London, 1895), 44.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, where the author reports having seen these monastic cells. In 1909 Gertrude Bell heard the same account about the monastery from the local bishop, as reported in van Berchem and Strzygowski, *Amida*, 193.

<sup>73</sup> Van Berchem and Strzygowski, *Amida*, 166, referring to the interment of the eleventh-century Patriarchs John IX and John X in the church of the Virgin: Michael Syrus, *Chronique*, XV, 1, 3 (ed. Chabot, III, 162, 171).

tuary and may relate to an early baptismal function, as is indicated by its position, exactly on the longitudinal axis of the original church.<sup>74</sup>

It is possible that the original building may be identified with one of the many "Great Churches" or cathedrals referred to in scattered sources recounting the history of the city at the time of the Persian blood baths. These sources reveal that after each devastating sack by the Persians the cathedral of Amida was restored or completely rebuilt, sometimes on a new site. An *ecclesia magna* is first recorded in A.D. 463/64 and was later destroyed.<sup>75</sup> In 502 Amida was attacked by the Persian King Cabades (Qawad) and was later retaken by the Emperor Anastasius, only to be lost again to the Persians and then to be won back again.<sup>76</sup> Cabades razed to the ground the metropolitan church, which was subsequently rebuilt by order of the crown.<sup>77</sup> A few years later Bishop John of Amida erected an *ecclesia* in honor of the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste which Zachariah of Mitylene designates as the "Great Church of the Forty Martyrs" and which preserved an image of Christ "in the likeness of a Galilean." The Persian King spared this church after hearing the pleas of a certain Christian prince of Arran.<sup>78</sup> About this time at least five monastery churches were situated in the city.<sup>79</sup> Toward the year 530 the Emperor Justinian permitted some Monophysite monks to return home to Amida, where they found their monasteries "destroyed and demolished and knocked to pieces."<sup>80</sup> Another "Great Church" was erected by Jacob Baradaeus or Burd'aya (died 578), the renowned apostle of the Syrian Monophysites.<sup>81</sup> This church may have been destroyed when, about 580, the Persians again approached Amida and "set fire to and burnt all its suburbs, and the churches, and the monasteries, and everything else situated there."<sup>82</sup> Finally, in 628 or 629 the Emperor Heraclius ordered the construction of a "Great

<sup>74</sup> A. Khatchatrian, *Les baptistères paléochrétiens* (Paris, 1962), 84, fig. 118. Van Berchem and Strzygowski, *Amida*, 187ff., restore a hexagonal font in the church, based on a sixteenth-century account of the city by the Venetian traveler Caterino Zeno: C. Grey, "The Travels of a Merchant in Persia," *Hakluyt Society*, 49, 2 (1873), 139ff., in particular 146 f., but his description applies to another building, possibly the Ulu Djami.

<sup>75</sup> J. P. N. Land, *Anecdota Syriaca* (Leiden, 1862), I, 65: *Scriptum est autem hoc volumen anno 775 [A.D. 464] in urbe Amida, diebus honorabilis et Dei amantis dom. Morô episcopi, in magnae ecclesiae vico*. This forms the colophon of a Syriac Pentateuch.

<sup>76</sup> Procopius, *De aedificiis*, III,ii,4ff., III,v,3; Malalas, Bonn ed., 398; Evagrius, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, III,37.

<sup>77</sup> John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, ed. E. W. Brooks, PO, XIX, 2 (Paris, 1925), 258. Cf. *The Chronicle of Joshua the Stylite composed in Syriac A.D. 507*, LIII (trans. W. Wright [Cambridge, 1882], 42).

<sup>78</sup> J. B. Chabot, *Anonymi auctoris Chronicon ad annum Christi 1234 pertinens*, CSCO, CIX, *Scriptores Syri*, LVI (Louvain, 1956) (Latin trans.), 4; *The Syriac Chronicle known as that of Zachariah of Mitylene*, VII,iv (trans. F. J. Hamilton and E. W. Brooks [London, 1899], 158). This church was situated *extra muros*.

<sup>79</sup> *The Syriac Chronicle . . . of Zachariah of Mitylene*, XII,vii (trans. Hamilton and Brooks, 324); Michael Syrus, *Chronique*, IX,14 (ed. Chabot, II, 171).

<sup>80</sup> John of Ephesus, *Lives*, 35, ed. Brooks, PO, XVIII,4 (Paris, 1924), 620.

<sup>81</sup> According to a Syriac biography of Jacob Baradaeus, which is (falsely?) ascribed to John of Ephesus (Land, *loc. cit.*). Cf. W. A. Wigram, *The Separation of the Monophysites* (London, 1923), 132ff. The Monophysite Bishop Nonnus (in Syriac Nuna) was banished by the Emperor Justin I from Seleucia Pieria and returned to his native Amida, but the city got its own Monophysite bishop only toward the middle of the sixth century. See *infra*, note 86.

<sup>82</sup> *The Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History of John, Bishop of Ephesus*, VI,34 (trans. R. Payne Smith [Oxford, 1860], 446).

Church." Possibly located in the vicinity of the Great Mosque, this too suffered damage and is reported to have been rebuilt about 770 as the cathedral of Thomas, and after a fire in 848 was reconstructed once again.<sup>83</sup> In 1297 Bar Hebraeus relates that at Amida "the great church of the Mother of God" was looted and burned, "and its buildings were destroyed, and its beautiful and wonderful porticoes and pillars were overthrown; and through the intensity of the conflagration and the fierceness of the flames it was reduced to a mere heap of stones."<sup>84</sup>

The Meryem Ana Kilisesi may be identified with one or more of the churches mentioned in the sources, and with some probability with one of the "Great Churches" or cathedrals, as is suggested by its huge size and its location in what appears to have been a thriving Christian quarter of the city also containing the churches of St. Cosmas (Mar Qosmo) and St. John.<sup>85</sup> The church discussed above was erected before the new cathedral ordered by Heraclius, which was not necessarily situated on the site of the earlier cathedral. Moreover, our church is more likely to have been an Orthodox rather than a Monophysite foundation. Its carvings suggest a date before the middle of the sixth century (when the Monophysites began to increase in numbers and in strength under the leadership of Jacob Baradaeus), and unless it was erected during the patriarchate of Severus of Antioch (512–18), himself a Monophysite, it was founded by members of the Orthodox community.<sup>86</sup> After the middle of the century it presumably passed into the custody of the Monophysites, at which time it may have been put under the patrocinium of the Virgin, whose cult was popular with the Monophysite and Jacobite communities.<sup>87</sup>

If our structure with a centralized plan was indeed the cathedral of the city, it served as a diocesan church. That it once belonged to a large group has already been mentioned. After the Persians took Nisibis in A.D. 363, Amida became the principal city in the twelfth diocese of West Mesopotamia, in the *praefectura orientalis*, and served as one of the great metropolitan sees of the Church of Antioch.<sup>88</sup> By 381 Amida had a bishop and was represented at the first Council of Constantinople. The bishoprics of Martyropolis, Ingila, Belabi-

<sup>83</sup> Dionysius of Tell-Mahre, *Chronicle*, ed. J. B. Chabot (Paris, 1925), 5, 96, 114. This account betrays some confusion on the part of the chronicler on whether the Emperor built the cathedral in the time of Bishop Thomas (*ibid.*, 5) or whether Heraclius' church was completely restored in 770, in the time of Bishop Mar Aba, at the expense of the archdeacon Thomas (*ibid.*, 96). For the location of the cathedral of Heraclius, S. Guyer, "Amida," *RepKunstW*, 38 (1916), 229 ff.

<sup>84</sup> *The Chronography of Gregory Abûl Faraj . . . commonly known as Bar Hebraeus*, XI, 598 (trans. E. A. W. Budge, 2 vols. [Oxford, 1932], 509).

<sup>85</sup> A. Gabriel, *Voyages archéologiques dans la Turquie Orientale*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1940), I, fig. 69, the most reliable map of the city's monuments. The so-called church of St. Cosmas (Mar Qosmo), now destroyed, was adorned with carved ornament identical to that of our church, from which it was possibly pilfered, or with which it was contemporary.

<sup>86</sup> Even as late as 563 or 564, when Eunomius was consecrated titular Jacobite metropolitan of Amida, the Orthodox clergy of the city was in a position to banish him, and he was forced to reside elsewhere, namely, in Constantinople: Honigmann, *Evêques*, 206.

<sup>87</sup> W. Hage, *Die syrisch-jakobitisch Kirche in frühislamischer Zeit* (Wiesbaden, 1966), 53. Perhaps before the reign of Justinian the monastery of the Mother of God at Edessa was built for use of the Monophysites: J. B. Segal, *Edessa, 'The Blessed City'* (Oxford, 1970), 190 note 6.

<sup>88</sup> Devreesse, *Patriarcat*, 241, 299 ff.; A. H. M. Jones, *The Cities of the Eastern Roman Empire*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1971), 445 f.; Honigmann, *Evêques*, 100 ff.

tene, and Arsamosata were under its jurisdiction. Connections between Amida and Antioch were especially close under Ephraemius of Amida, a layman, polemist, and writer, who was appointed *comes Orientis* and patriarch of Antioch (526–44) and became the only native Mesopotamian to attain a position of real distinction in Byzantium.<sup>89</sup> The carved elements surviving from the original centralized church date approximately from this period.

Thus, I agree with André Grabar, who denies that this tetraconch church served as a martyrium and sees in it only a formal resemblance with the tetraconch at Rusafah (which he wrongly identifies as a martyrium).<sup>90</sup> But, though some link probably exists between our church and the building at Rusafah, I find little reason for believing, as does Grabar, that the former derives from Rusafah, and even less reason for accepting his theory that its origin can be traced to pagan funerary architecture.

Any lingering doubts about the ecclesiastical functions of the aisled tetraconchs mentioned so far are dispelled when we turn to the last example of our architectural genus in Syria, the cathedral church at Bosra in the Hauran (fig. 10). Impressive in size by Early Christian standards (38 by 50 m.), this is the largest church both at Bosra and in the Hauran, and rivals in this respect any ecclesiastical foundation of pre-Islamic Syria.<sup>91</sup> Its size alone attests to its ecclesiastical prominence. Situated in a quarter of the city that contains a number of other Christian edifices, it was located at a stone's throw from a multistoried palatial complex incorporating a *triconchos*, which appears to be of the same approximate date as the tetraconch and to have been used in conjunction with it (fig. 14).<sup>92</sup> Entrances placed in the perimeter walls of the chambers flanking the apsed chancel of the church provided direct communication with the *episkopeion*.

Identification of the patron, date, and dedication of the church is provided by a Greek inscription on a lintel once *in situ* over its main entrance in the western perimeter walls:

+ Ἐπὶ τοῦ Θεοφιλεστάτου καὶ ὁσιωτάτου Ἰουλιανοῦ ἀρχιεπισκ(όπου), ὡκοδομήθη καὶ ἐτελιώθη ὁ ἅγιος ναὸς Σεργίου, Βάχχου, καὶ Λεοντίου, τῶν ἀθλοφόρων καὶ καλλινίκων μαρτύρων. Ἐν ἔτι υἷ', ἰνδ(ικτιῶνος) 5' +

“Under the most God-beloved and most holy Julianus, archbishop, was built and completed the holy church of Sergius, Bacchus, and Leontius, martyrs victorious and triumphant. In (the) year 407, (the) sixth indiction.”<sup>93</sup>

<sup>89</sup> G. Downey, “Ephraemius,” *Church History*, 7 (1938), 364ff.; A. A. Vasiliev, *Justin the First: An Introduction to the Epoch of Justinian the Great* (Cambridge, Mass., 1950), 241 notes 191, 192.

<sup>90</sup> Grabar, *Martyrium*, I, 115, 189f. Grabar does not identify the church as a cathedral.

<sup>91</sup> M. De Vogüé, *Syrie centrale; Architecture civile et religieuse du I<sup>er</sup> au VII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1863–77), I, 63ff., II, pls. 22–23; H. C. Butler, in *Syria*, Div. II, Sec. A, pt. 4, Princeton University Archaeological Expeditions to Syria in 1904–1905 and 1909, p. 281ff.; J. W. Crowfoot, *Churches at Bosra and Samaria-Sebaste*, British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem, Suppl. Paper 4 (London, 1937). In recent times the site of the building has become a public dung heap.

<sup>92</sup> Butler, in *Syria*, PUAES, vol. cit., map following p. 295.

<sup>93</sup> W. H. Waddington, *Inscriptions grecques et latines de la Syrie* (Paris, 1870), 462, no. 1915; E. Littmann, D. Magie, D. R. Stuart, in *Syria*, Div. III, sec. A, pt. 4, PUAES, p. 246, no. 557. The year 407 of the Bosran era began on March 22, 512, the sixth indiction on September 1 of the same year.

Thus, the church was consecrated by Archbishop Julianus between September 512 and March 513 in memory of the renowned military saints Sergius, Bacchus, and Leontius. This dedication does not prove that the church was intended to serve principally as a martyrium or memorial, as Grabar affirms.<sup>94</sup> In the inscription the church is styled *hagios naos* rather than *martyrion*. We have already seen that by the sixth century the cult of martyrs had assumed vast proportions in Syria, and many churches, including cathedrals, bore the names of martyrs.<sup>95</sup> In the Holy Land, as early as the reign of Constantine the Great, the basilica on Golgotha and the church of the Nativity at Bethlehem are evidence that these functions overlapped. The cathedral of Bosra was primarily a house of God for the celebration of the Eucharist which was under the protective or intercessory patronage of military saints. Thus, a *depositio* of their relics may have been made in the church, and memorial services may have been held in their honor.<sup>96</sup>

The cathedral of Bosra also served as the metropolitan church in the vast ecclesiastical province of Arabia.<sup>97</sup> In the sixth century two of its suffragans were located at Zorava (modern Ezraa) and Gerasa (modern Jerash), where religious buildings derivative of the cathedral of Bosra were erected. At Zorava in A.D. 515 the *proteuon* Ioannes built a "house of God" in honor of St. George and had a relic of this Saint translated to it (fig. 15).<sup>98</sup> A single-storied centralized structure enclosing an inner ring of piers, this was a regular congregational church, quite possibly the local cathedral, and bore the connotation of a martyrium. Likewise, the church of St. John the Baptist at Gerasa was built in A.D. 531 as a "small edition" of the cathedral at Bosra.<sup>99</sup> Both filiations point to the impact which the church of Julianus must have had in the Hauran and Transjordan during the first half of the sixth century, an impact which was not lost on the Moslems when they took the city in 632.<sup>100</sup>

The half-dozen aisled tetraconchs in Syria and northern Mesopotamia were all built as churches, and it is possible that all, or nearly all, were designed to function primarily as cathedrals and metropolitan churches, a conclusion which I offer as a working hypothesis rather than an assertion. The evidence pointing

<sup>94</sup> Grabar, *Martyrium*, I, 146, 346.

<sup>95</sup> Waddington, *Inscriptions*, nos. 1920, 2159, 2436, 2464, 2510, 2548, 2637b. Cf. Butler, *Churches*, 249; A. M. Schneider, "Die altchristliche Bischofs- und Gemeindekirche und ihre Benennung," *Nachrichten der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, Philol.-hist. Klasse*, 1952, no. 7.

<sup>96</sup> As in the church of St. George at Zorava, which derives from the cathedral of Bosra (see *infra*). This identification of the church at Bosra has been widely accepted (e.g., by Schneider, Lassus, E. B. Smith, Lavin, Krautheimer, and Deichmann), but is rejected by Grabar.

<sup>97</sup> S. Vailhé, "La province ecclésiastique d'Arabia," *Echos d'Orient*, 2 (1898), 166ff.; Devreesse, *Patriarcat*, 114ff., 208ff.

<sup>98</sup> Waddington, *Inscriptions*, 569, no. 2498; W. K. Prentice, *Greek and Latin Inscriptions* (New York, 1908), no. 437a; Lassus, *Sanctuaires*, 140ff., 249ff., 254; Butler, *Churches*, 122ff. For the present conoid dome, a modern replacement of an earlier covering, see W. Karnapp, "Das Kuppelproblem von St. Georg in Ezraa (Syrien)," in *Tortulae: Studien zu altchristlichen und byzantinischen Monumenten*, ed. W. N. Schumacher (Rome, 1966) (= *Römische Quartalschrift*, 30, Supplementheft), 178ff.

<sup>99</sup> J. W. Crowfoot, *Churches at Jerash*, BSAJ, Suppl. Paper 3 (London, 1931), 20ff., fig. 4.

<sup>100</sup> As discussed by E. Herzfeld, "Mshattā, Hira und Bādiya," *Jahrbuch der preussischen Kunstsammlungen*, 42 (1921), 104ff., in particular 119ff.; K. A. C. Creswell, *The Origin of the Plan of the Dome of the Rock*, BSAJ, Suppl. Paper 2 (London, 1924).



in this direction is far more cogent than the suggestion advanced by Grabar that they were built as martyria. Indeed, there is no evidence to prove that such was the primary function of any one of these buildings. These churches must be dissociated from the many other centralized structures to which Grabar has attributed such a purpose. The aisled tetraconchs stand apart from the martyria and, from the point of view of ecclesiastical administration and influence, are to be identified as the highest-ranking churches in *Oriens*.

Since all these tetraconchs are certainly extremely similar in form and several are perhaps identical in function, the question arises as to how to explain their striking resemblances. Is each of these churches to be regarded as a monument independent of the others, whose closeness in form and function is due to historical chance, or do they relate to each other by virtue of common family membership? Their close geographical, chronological, formal, and functional relationships encourage me to postulate with some justification their derivation from a single architectural genus and even from a common prototype.

These, of course, are not the only aisled tetraconchs in the Early Christian and Medieval periods. At least twenty such structures have been recorded, and they are situated in Italy, Egypt, the Balkans, Asia Minor, Armenia, and Azerbaijan (fig. 17). Nor are the Syrian and Mesopotamian examples the earliest or the latest in date. The first aisled tetraconch which can be securely dated is the church of San Lorenzo at Milan, a foundation of the third quarter of the fourth century, and the latest examples, in Armenia and Azerbaijan, were built after those in Syria, between the seventh century and about 1000.<sup>101</sup> While the tetraconchs in *Oriens* derive from a combination of geographical, formal, and functional factors, no evidence at hand points to direct historical or archaeological ties between them and any of the other buildings in the Mediterranean basin, including the early church at Milan. Rather, they belong to a local group, and the fact that all served as churches in the Patriarchate of Antioch at the zenith of its influence opens up an avenue worthy of exploration: namely the postulation of an Antiochene prototype from which they could have derived independently of each other.

From the very beginning Antioch was visited by the Apostle Paul and became one of the earliest strongholds of Christianity. Its Patriarchate claimed greater antiquity than all other ancient Christian Churches. It seems that, by the time of the Council of Nicaea, the head of the Church of Antioch exercised authority over bishops and metropolitans in the diocese of *Oriens* which encompassed the provinces from Mesopotamia and Syria on the north to the boundary of Egypt on the south; in fact, its jurisdiction extended beyond the limits of *Oriens* to include Cilicia and Isauria. Toward the end of the fourth

<sup>101</sup> W. Eugene Kleinbauer, "Toward a Dating of San Lorenzo in Milan: Masonry and Building Methods of Milanese, Roman, and Early Christian Architecture," *Arte Lombarda*, 13 (1968), 1 ff.; D. Kinney, "The Evidence for the Dating of S. Lorenzo in Milan," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 31 (1972), 92 ff.; S. Ruffolo, "Le strutture murarie degli edifici paleocristiani milanesi," *Rivista dell'Istituto Nazionale di Archeologia e Storia dell'Arte*, N. S., 18 (1970), 5 ff. For the aisled tetraconchs in Armenia and Azerbaijan, see my "Zvart'nots and the Origins of Christian Architecture in Armenia," *Art Bulletin*, 54 (1972), 245 ff.; and the critical review of this paper by F. W. Deichmann, in *BZ*, 66 (1973), 211.

century, the supra-metropolitan organization of the Eastern Christian Church was founded on the political division of the Empire into imperial dioceses, and by the beginning of the fifth century Antioch itself had become a supra-metropolis claiming supremacy over all of *Oriens*. From the fifth to the seventh century, Antiochene jurisdiction embraced eleven metropolitan provinces and 127 episcopal dioceses.<sup>102</sup> Beginning with A.D. 335, the imperial diocese was ruled by a *comes*, in whose hands the administrative, judicial, and military powers were concentrated.<sup>103</sup> Antioch, therefore, enjoyed a privileged position with respect to both Church organization and administrative rule. It was known for its many sumptuous monuments and was one of the artistic capitals in the ancient world.<sup>104</sup>

Once the Church of Antioch had started to exercise its far-reaching power, aisled tetraconchs began to appear in its territory. In the third quarter of the fifth century the archbishop or eparch of Antioch officially became "patriarch,"<sup>105</sup> and the earliest tetraconch in Syria was built *ca.* 460 at Apamea. There is no evidence connecting the foundation of the Apamene church with that of any of the others in Syria, and, therefore, it cannot justifiably be identified as their prototype. Tetraconchs were built elsewhere at an earlier period, but they cannot be directly linked with either the church at Apamea or the others in *Oriens*. By the middle of the fifth century, both San Lorenzo at Milan and the tetraconch within the precinct of the Library of Hadrian at Athens had been erected, but neither of these buildings seems to have enjoyed any particular prominence or fame, which would have made it the special focus of attention on the part of Syrian church officials or master builders.<sup>106</sup> Moreover, the tetraconchs at Milan and Athens included galleries, and structurally stand apart from all the examples in *Oriens*, which were single-storied edifices.

Presumably, the prototype of the tetraconch church in Syria and Mesopotamia was located in that region and was built before the church at Apamea was erected. It must have been a church and must have served analogous

<sup>102</sup> Devreesse, *Patriarcat*, 305 ff.

<sup>103</sup> Downey, *History of Antioch*, 354f., who identifies a Christian named Felicianus, appointed in A.D. 335, as the first *comes Orientis*.

<sup>104</sup> Much has been written about the artistic influence exercised by Antioch, but this literature requires re-examination in the light of recent discoveries in Syria and elsewhere. In architecture the U-shaped bema and perhaps the carved capitals with wind-blown acanthus leaves migrated from Antioch to other sites in Syria, and the influence of Antiochene floor mosaics has been traced throughout *Oriens* and in Cilicia: L. Budde, *Antike Mosaiken in Kilikien*, 2 vols. (Recklinghausen, 1969-72). It may be noted that formal atria are missing both in Antiochene churches and in the Syrian tetraconchs, with the apparent exception of the tetraconch at Apamea, where the colonnaded quadriporticus situated to the west of the building may derive from a pre-existing structure on the site. That the aisled tetraconchs in Syria and northern Mesopotamia may descend from a model at Antioch was suggested by Smith, *Dome*, 115, who supposed that this model was a martyrion.

<sup>105</sup> E. Honigsmann, "Juvenal of Jerusalem," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 5 (1950), 272.

<sup>106</sup> On the contrary, the church of San Lorenzo was probably erected during the episcopate of Auxentius I (355-74), an Arian from Cappadocia who may have visited Syria and seen its monuments. See note 101 *supra*. This hypothesis will be explored in detail in my forthcoming monograph *The Aisled Tetraconch*. The specifically Antiochene cults of St. Babylas and St. Romanus reached Italy in the sixth century, through an influx of Syrian emigrants: U. Monneret de Villard, "Antiochia e Milano nel VI secolo," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, 12 (1946), 374 ff.

ecclesiastical functions; in fact, it was probably a cathedral and a metropolitan or patriarchal church. Any other assumption about its purpose would make it difficult to explain the functional analogy between these tetraconchs.

If these suppositions and inferences are warranted, one church comes to mind which can be tentatively proposed as the prototype of these buildings: the *Megale Ekklesia* founded by Constantine the Great at Antioch in 327 and dedicated at an *encaenia* summoned by his son Constantius in 341.<sup>107</sup> One of the most renowned foundations of Early Christian architecture, Constantine's Great Church is known to us from literary references, and concerning it a considerable amount of historical evidence survives to which modern specialists have turned time and again. Its history is well documented, but its architectural form is perhaps not as certain as we have been led to suppose.

Since all trace of the church has disappeared, or still awaits the work of the spade, its form can be restored only from literary evidence, in particular from Eusebius' *Triakontaeterikos*, 9.15 and *Vita Constantini*, III.50. Both accounts are *ekphraseis* which state that the church was a tall structure designed in the form of an octahedron and ringed by chambers in two stories, in all probability ambulatories and galleries. In the *Triakontaeterikos* it is said that:

... μακροῖς ἔξωθεν περιβόλοις τὸν πάντα νεῶν περιλαμβάνων, εἴσω δὲ τὸ ἀνάκτορον εἰς ἀμήχανον ἐπαίρων ὕψος, ἐν ὀκταέδρου μὲν σχήματι κατεποίκιλλεν, οἴκοις δὲ τοῦτο πλείοσιν ἐξέδραις τε ἐν κύκλῳ περιστοιχισάμενος, παντοίοις ἐστεφάνου κάλλεσιν.

"Externally the whole sanctuary is surrounded by very high walls [or enclosures of vast size], and inside it rises to an astounding height and is variously decorated and laid out like an octahedron and ringed all round with many chambers and exedrae on all sides and sumptuously adorned."<sup>108</sup>

The account in the *Vita Constantini* is similar:

... μακροῖς μὲν ἔξωθεν περιβόλοις τὸν πάντα νεῶν περιλαβών, εἴσω δὲ τὸν εὐκτήριον οἶκον εἰς ἀμήχανον ἐπάρας ὕψος, ἐν ὀκταέδρου μὲν συνεστῶτα σχήματι, κύκλῳ δὲ ὑπερώων τε καὶ καταγείων χωρημάτων ἀπανταχόθεν περιεστοιχισμένον, ὃν καὶ χρυσοῦ πλείονος ἀφθονίᾳ χαλκοῦ τε καὶ τῆς λοιπῆς πολυτελοῦς ὕλης ἐστεφάνου κάλλεσιν.

"On the outside he [Constantine] surrounded the entire church by very high walls [or enclosures of vast size]; and having the interior of the house of prayer reach to an extraordinary height, he had it designed in the form of an octahedron ringed all round with chambers both on the upper and lower levels. The whole was richly adorned with a wealth of gold, brass, and other costly materials."<sup>109</sup>

<sup>107</sup> The essential documentation on the Great Church is reported in Downey, *History of Antioch*, 342ff.

<sup>108</sup> Ed. I. A. Heikel, *Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte*, VII (Leipzig, 1902), 221 line 9ff.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 99 line 1ff. I will not enter here into the thorny problem of whether this passage was written by Eusebius himself.

All previous attempts to restore the Great Church make it an eight-sided building with ambulatories and galleries resembling the church of San Vitale at Ravenna or the church of Sts. Sergius and Bacchus at Constantinople.<sup>110</sup> But both the *Triakontaeterikos* and the *Vita Constantini* refer to the structure not as being *oktagonos* but *oktahedros*.<sup>111</sup> According to Euclid, an octahedron is a stereometric figure consisting of eight planes.<sup>112</sup> Stereometrically, the church of San Vitale is a decahedron (fig. 16).<sup>113</sup> While Eusebius surely knew his Euclid, he did not necessarily have a stereometric figure in mind. Indeed, we cannot be certain that he was referring to the ground plan of the Great Church. Rather, he may have been struck by an outstanding visual element. His impression of high walls and great height, and his mention of the upper before the lower level raise the possibility that *oktahedros* applies to the superstructure or the covering of the central space of the building, a part which is known from other early sources to have been constructed of timber and whose form may have been complex.<sup>114</sup> I submit that this is a valid possibility and maintain that we can no longer assume as a matter of course that in plan the Great Church was an octagonal structure. Other possibilities may be explored, and one of them is the aisled tetraconch.<sup>115</sup> According to the *ekphrasis*, the building was "really unique in size and beauty."

<sup>110</sup> Compare the translation of the pertinent passage in the *Vita Constantini* by Mango, *Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 11: "... the entire church ... was made in the form of an octagon. ..." For restorations of the building, W. Dynes, "The First Christian Palace-Church Type," *Marsyas*, 11 (1962-64), 1 ff.; Krautheimer, *Architecture*, 52f.; A. Birnbaum, "Die Oktogone von Antiocheia, Nazianz und Nyssa," *RepKunstW*, 36 (1913), 181ff.; F. W. Deichmann, "Das Oktogon von Antiocheia: Heroon-Martyrion, Palastkirche oder Kathedrale?", *BZ*, 65 (1972), 40ff.

<sup>111</sup> Theophanes, *Chronographia*, a. m. 5819 (ed. De Boor, I, 28), refers to the church as τὸ ὀκτάγωνον κυριακόν, and Michael Syrus, *Chronique*, VII,3 (ed. Chabot, I, 259), calls it both "the octagonal church" and "the round church." Both authors, it should be pointed out, wrote apparently long after the Great Church had disappeared—it is not mentioned by name after Evagrius at the close of the sixth century—so that neither was an eyewitness. Theophanes may have been familiar with the writings of Eusebius and have mistaken his "octahedron" for an octagon.

<sup>112</sup> To be precise, "an octahedron is a solid figure contained by eight equal and equilateral triangles": Ὀκτάεδρον ἐστὶ σχῆμα στερεὸν ὑπὸ ὀκτὼ τριγώνων ἴσων καὶ ἰσοπλευρῶν περιεχόμενον (*The Thirteen Books of Euclid's Elements*, Book XI, ed. T. L. Heath, 3 vols. [Cambridge, 1926], II, 271). That the Great Church was laid out in the form of such a polyhedron is beyond belief.

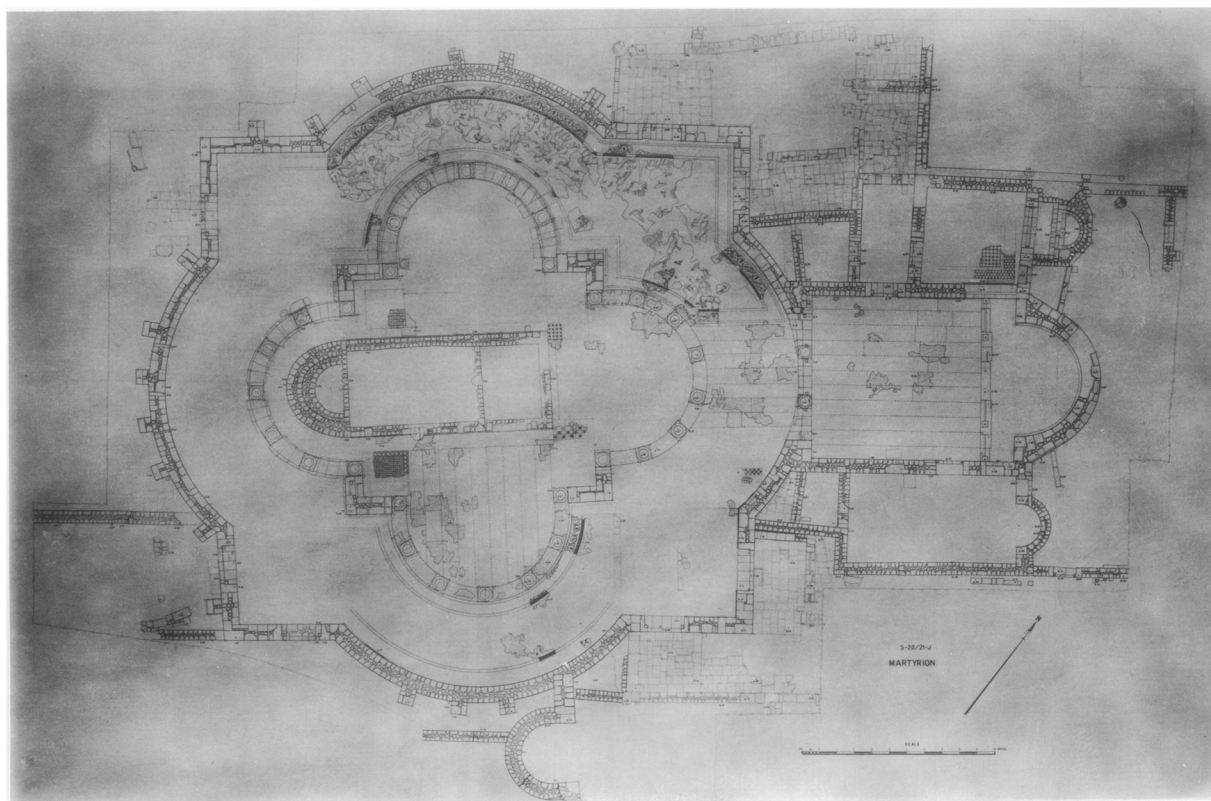
<sup>113</sup> That is, if we take the central dome or vault as one face.

<sup>114</sup> John Chrysostom, *Si esurierit inimicus*, III (PG, LI, col. 175), confirms that the structure attained great height, and other sources characterize the church as σφαίροειδής: cf. the Arian church historian in Philostorgius, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, VII (ed. J. Bidez [Leipzig, 1913], 212); Theophanes, *Chronographia*, a. m. 5833 (ed. De Boor, I, 36); the eighth-century Syriac *Liber Chalipharum* (Land, *Anecdota*, I, 104). John Chrysostom, *In epist. ad Ephes.*, cap. IV hom. X,2 (PG, LXII, col. 77), implies that the central covering of the structure was constructed of wood, and Evagrius (*Historia Ecclesiastica*, VI,3, eds. J. Bidez and L. Parmentier [London, 1898], 227) reports that Ephraemius of Antioch had rebuilt the central covering or *hemisphaerion* of timbers from Daphne. No sources describe the form of either covering.

<sup>115</sup> One serious stumbling block in my hypothesis is the virtual certainty that the "Great Church" contained galleries above the ambulatories ringing the center space, a feature absent in all the Syrian and Mesopotamian tetraconchs, and even in the Caucasian examples. To counter this weighty objection I submit two suggestions. First, the patrons of the later tetraconchs may have found galleries unnecessary for liturgical purposes and simply eliminated them. Such a process of "reduction" of models has been found to be characteristic of other "copies" in Early Christian and Medieval buildings: cf. R. Krautheimer, "Introduction to an 'Iconography of Medieval Architecture,'" *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 5 (1942), 1 ff. Second, it is possible that the "Great Church" at Antioch lost its galleries during a subsequent remodeling, specifically the one which may have taken place after the disastrous earthquake that wrecked Antioch in 458: Downey, *History of Antioch*, 476ff. The tetraconch at Apamea is the earliest known building of this type in Syria and it was built shortly after this earthquake (see *supra*, p. 100).

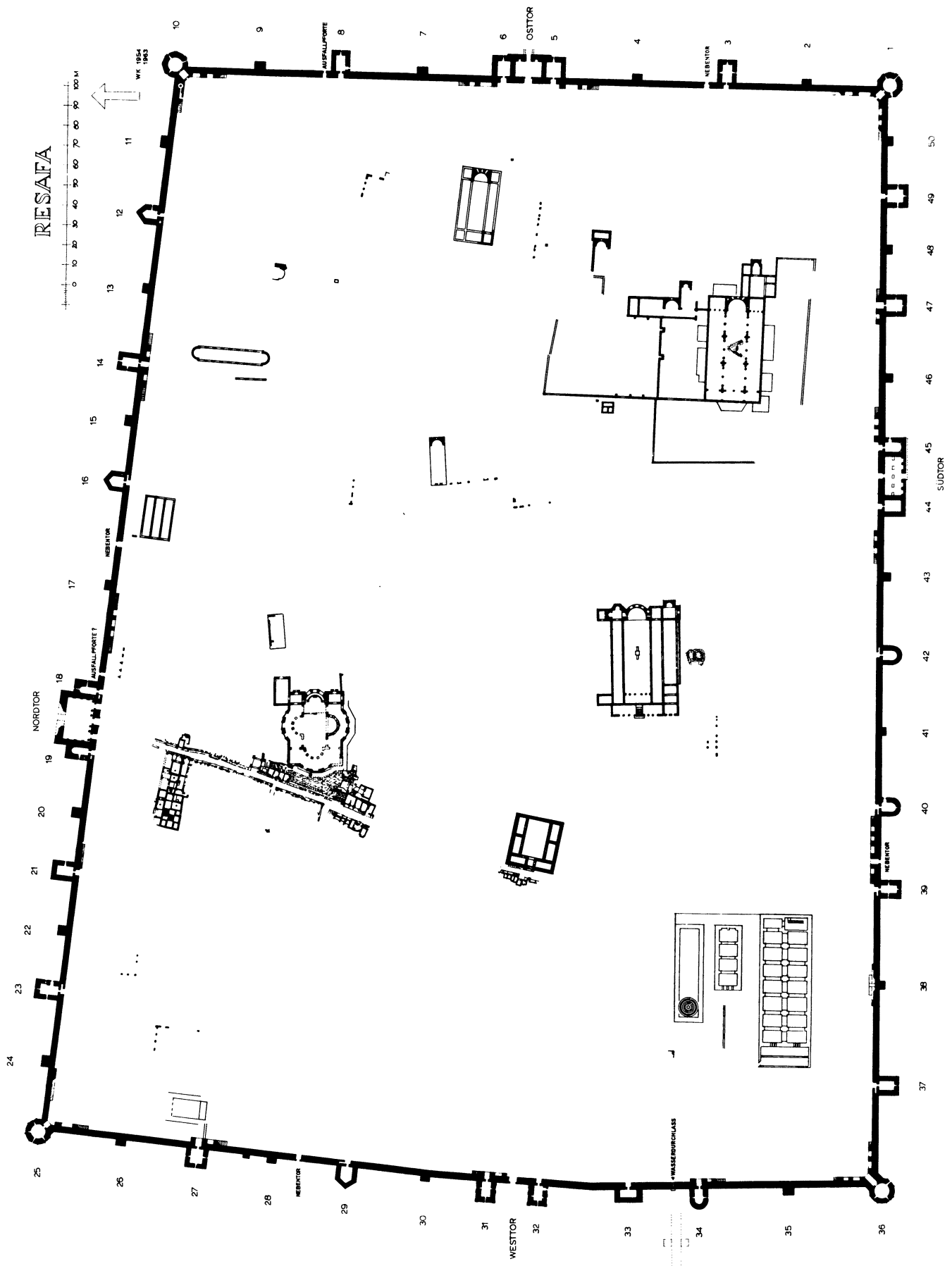


1. View from North (1938)

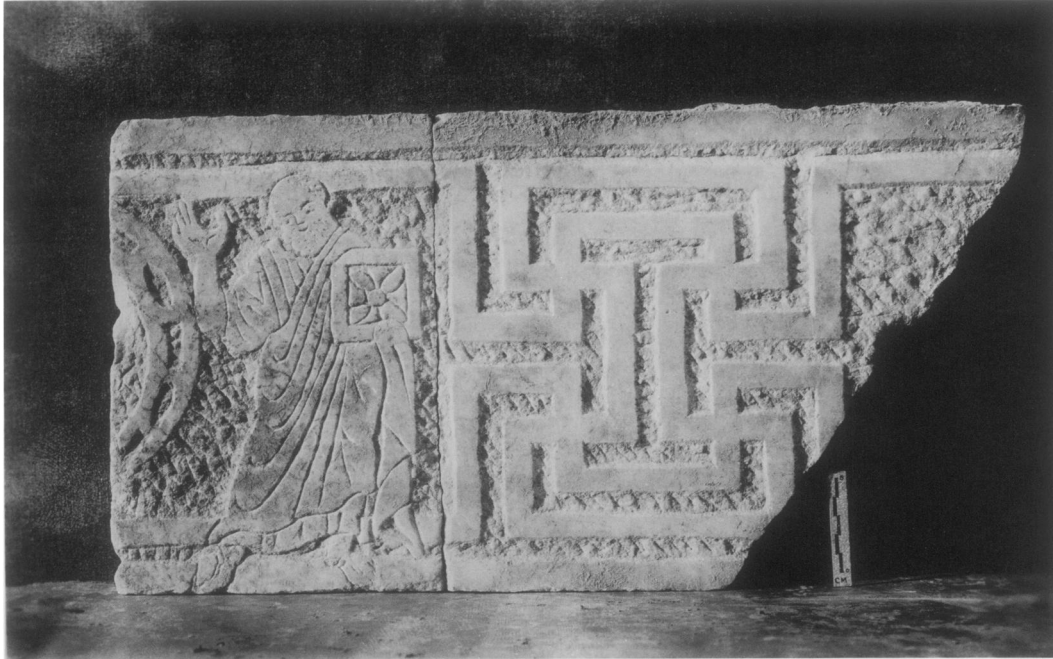


2. Plan

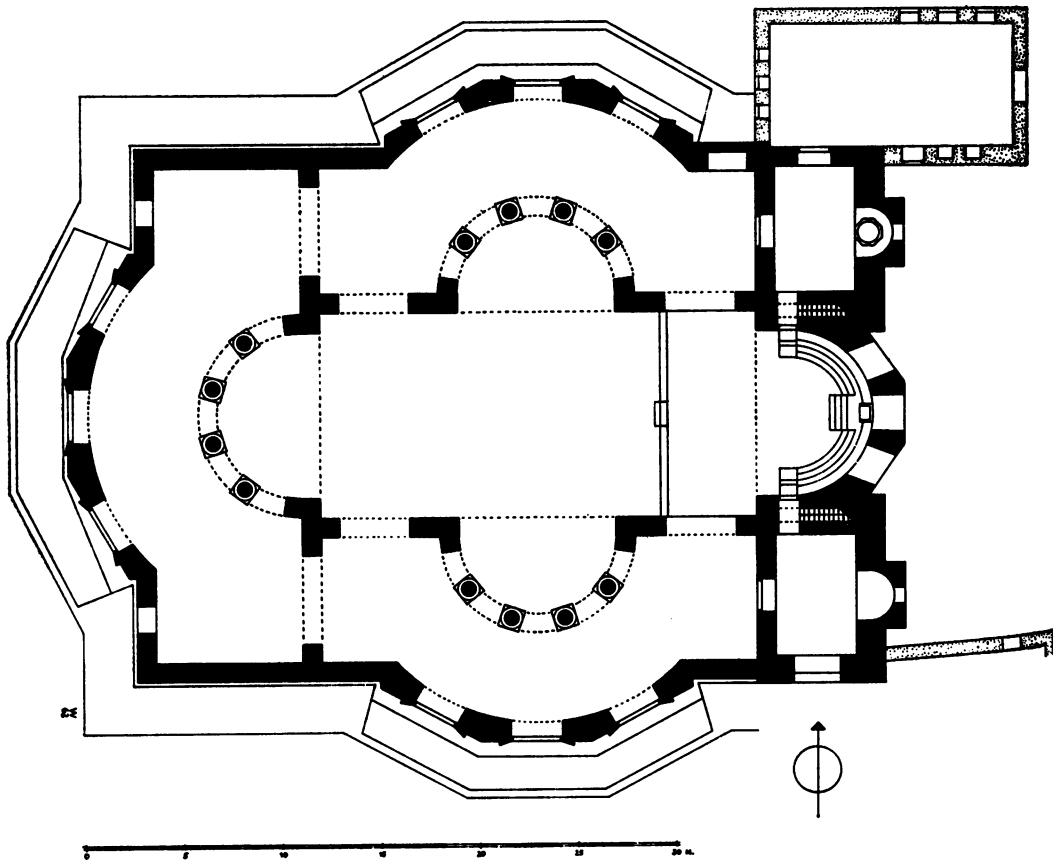
Seleucia Pieria, Church



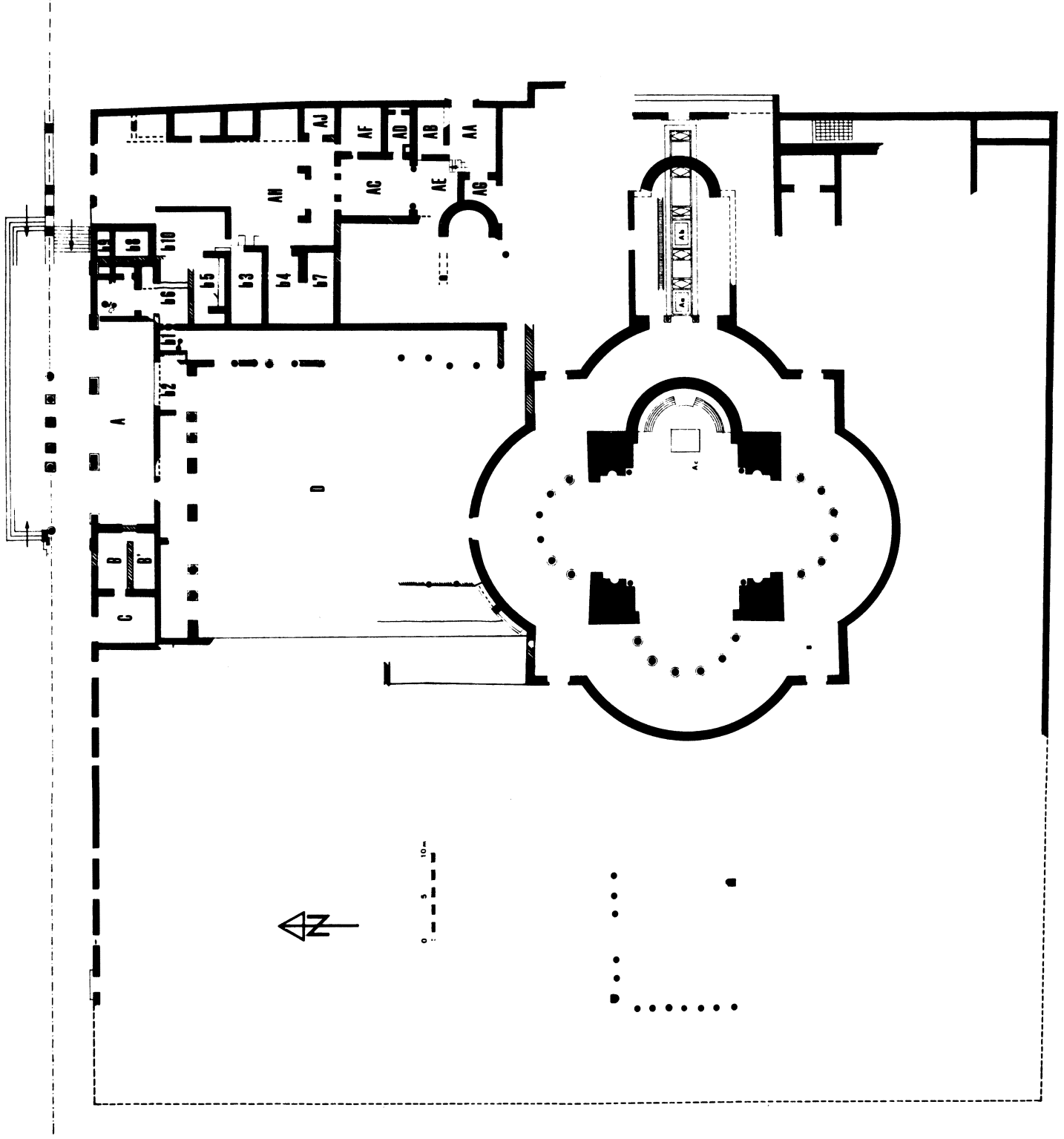
3. Rusafah, City Plan



4. Seleucia Pieria, Church. Relief

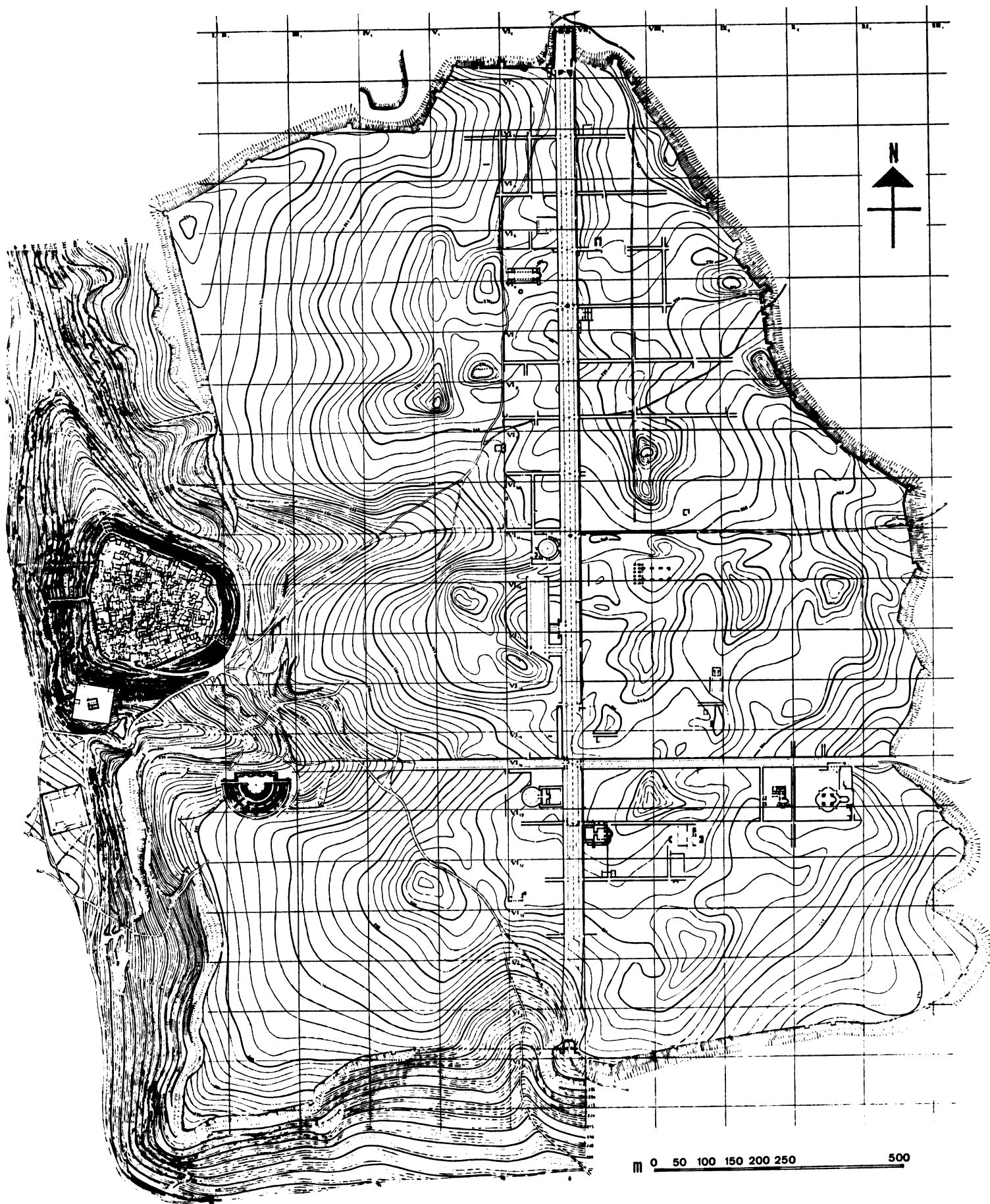


5. Rusafah, Tetraconch, Plan

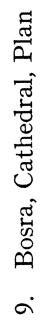


6. Apamea, Tetraconch Complex, Plan



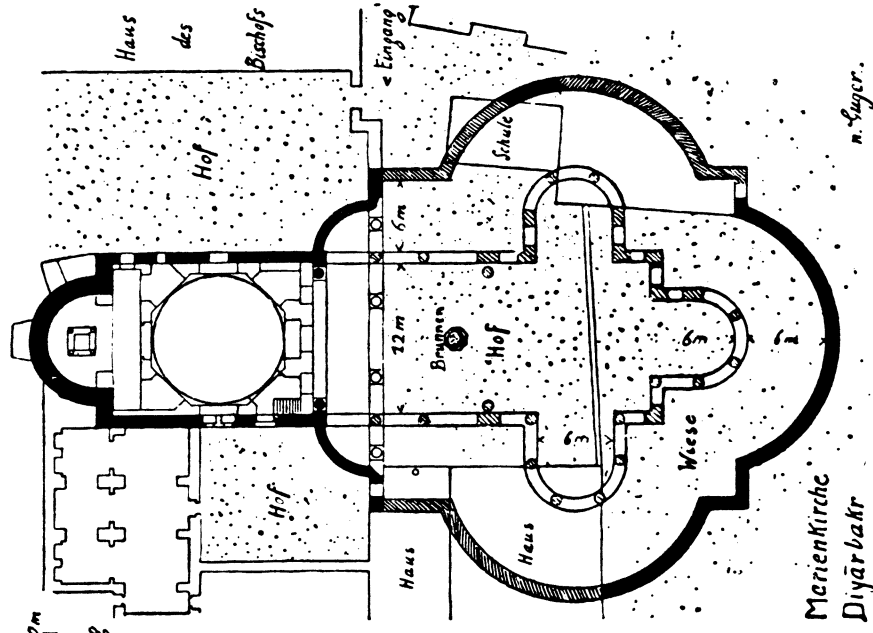
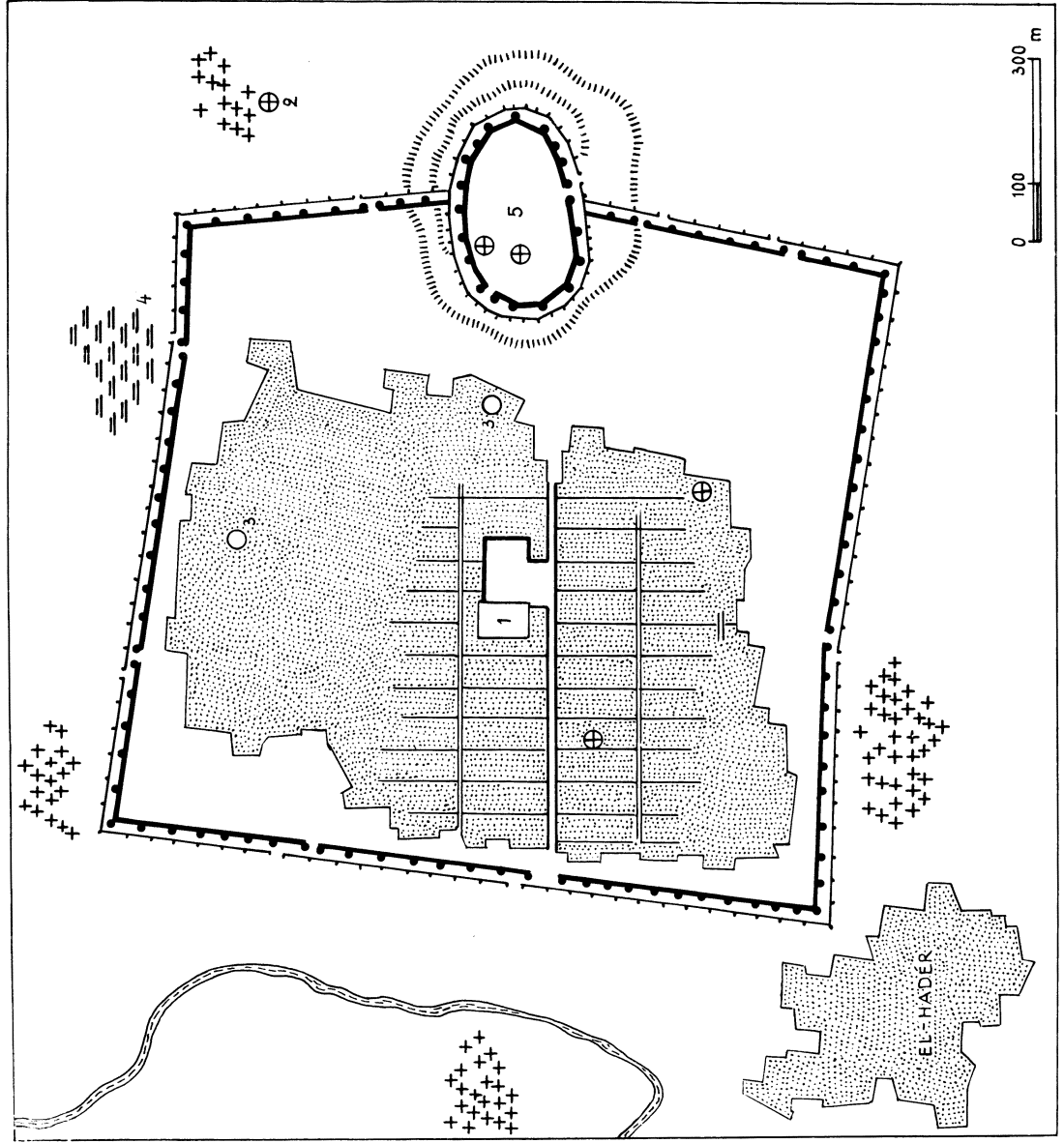
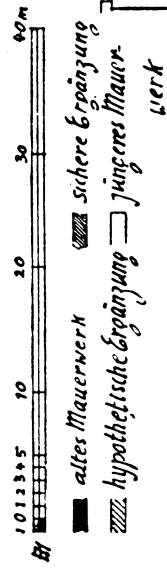


7. Apamea, City Plan



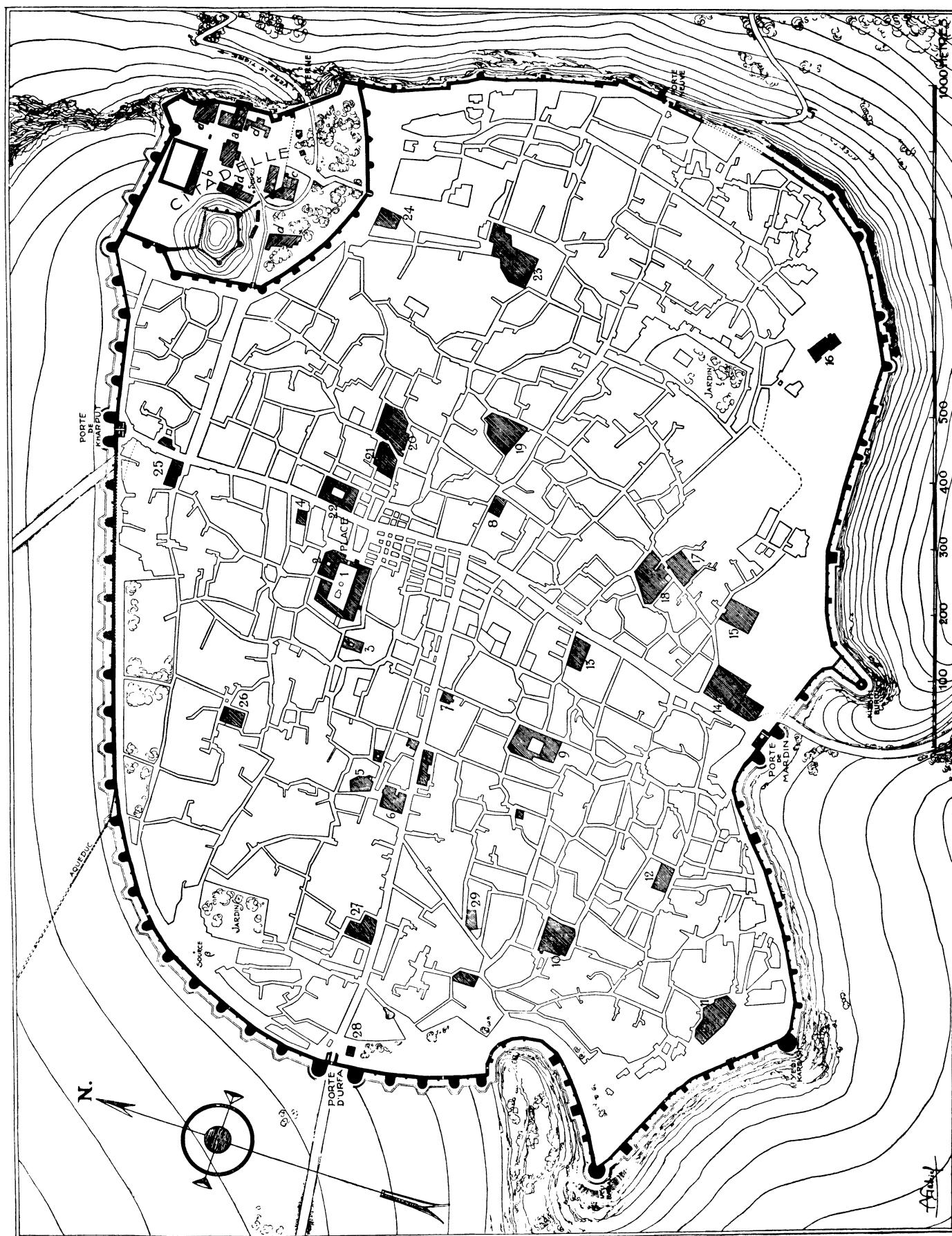


10. Aleppo, Halawiyya, Prayer Hall

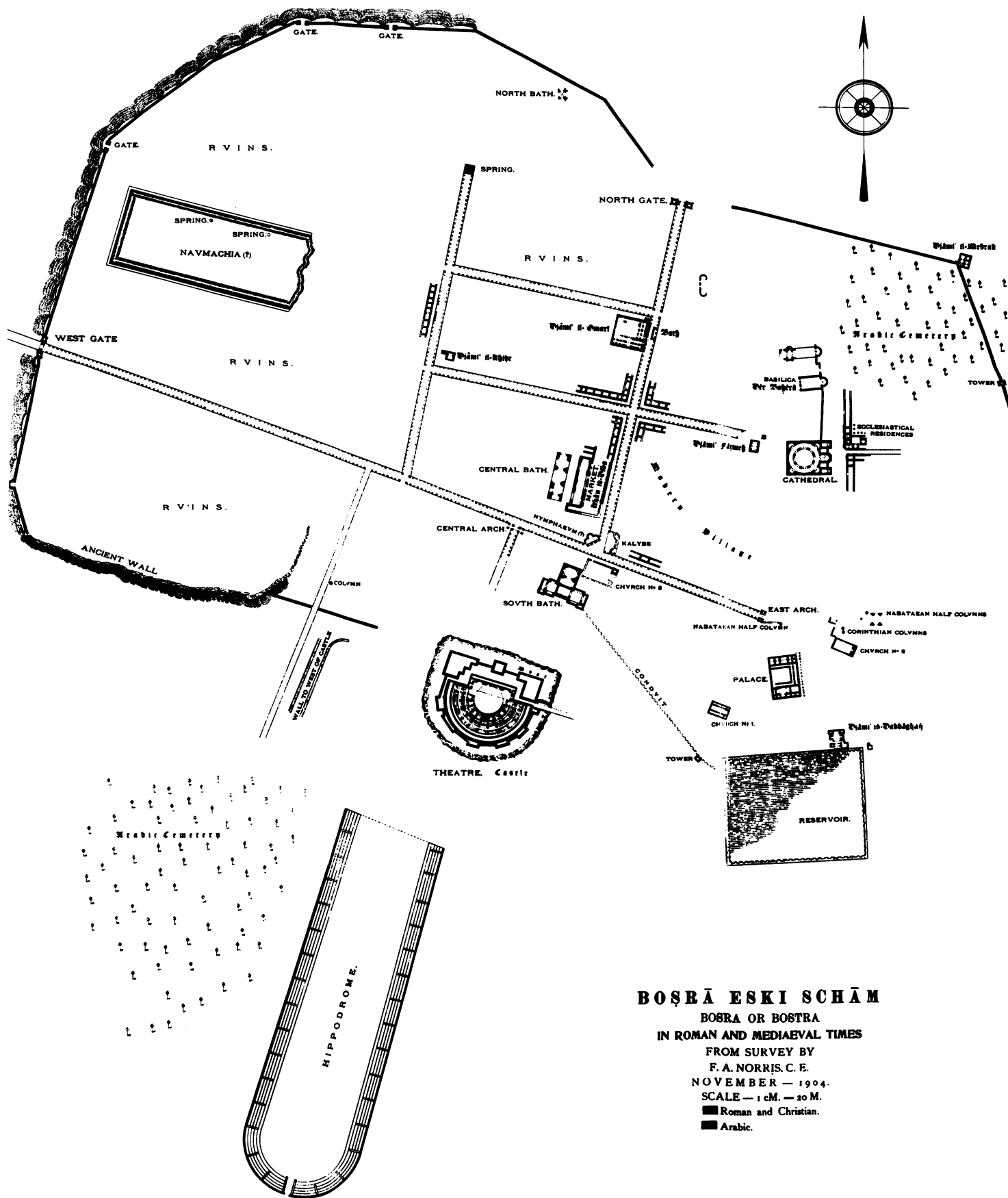


12. Amida, Church of the Virgin, Plan

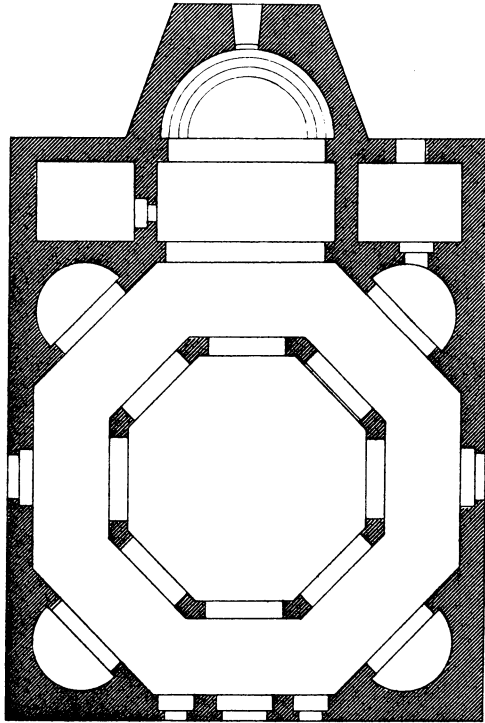
11. Aleppo, City Plan (No. 1 = Halawiyya)



13. Amida, City Plan (No. 10=Church of the Virgin)

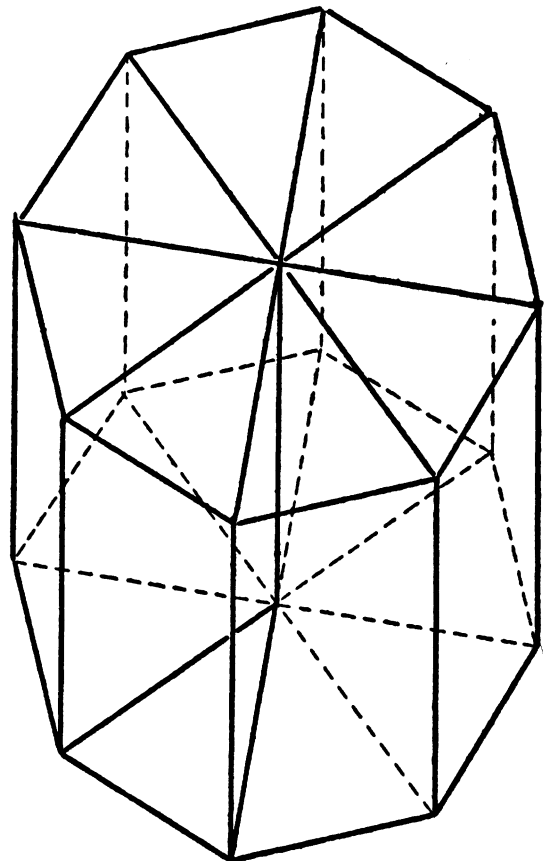


14. Bosra, City Plan

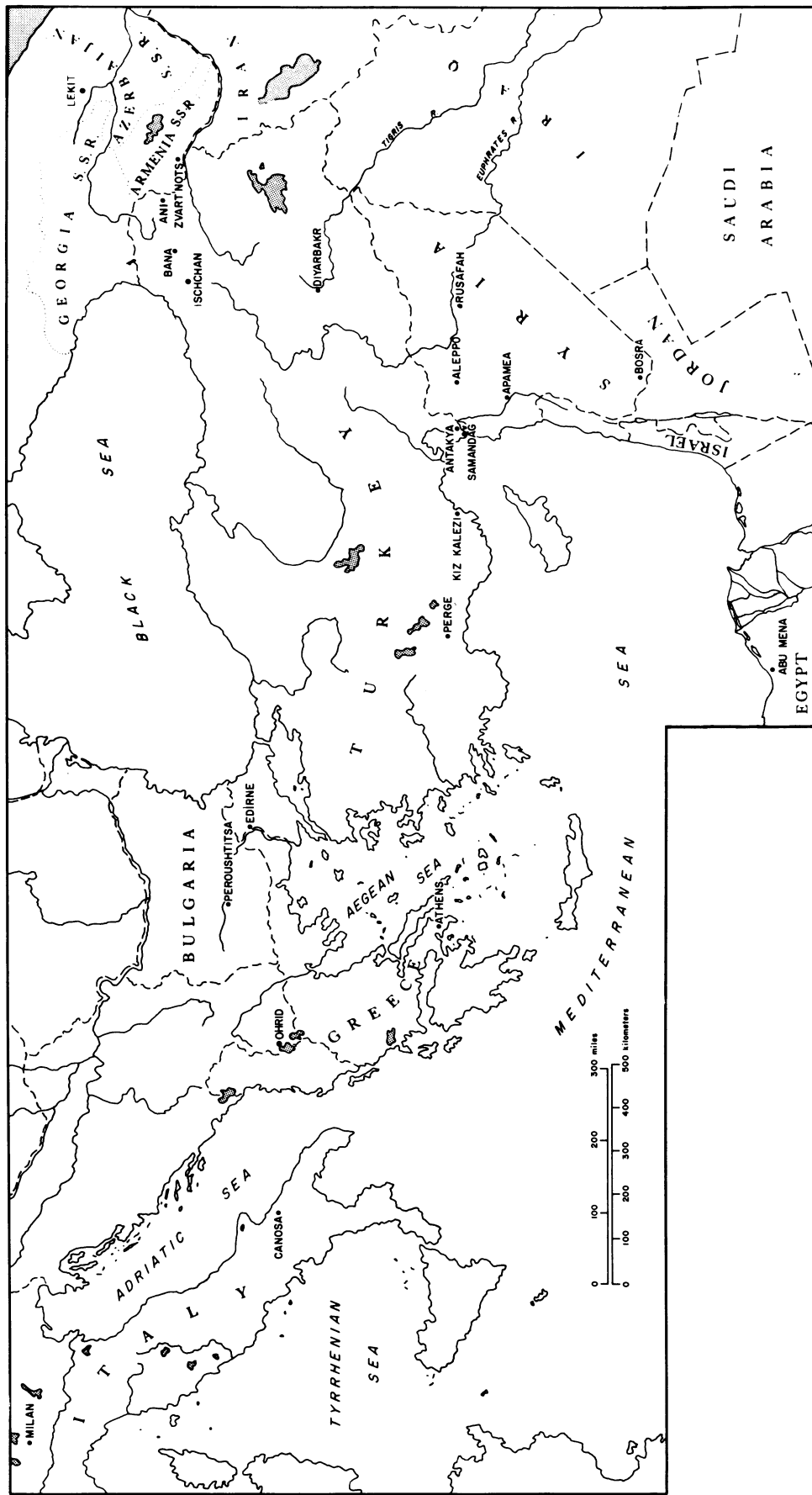


Plan à 0.0025 p.m.

15. Zorava, Church of St. George, Plan



16. Ravenna, Church of S. Vitale.  
Stereometric Analysis



17. Map showing Sites of Aisted Tetraconchs



While the shape of the Constantinian church remains doubtful, its function can be clearly established. It was founded under imperial auspices to replace the *Palaea* or "old, apostolic church" in the city and to serve as the new cathedral.<sup>116</sup> All literary references call it ἡ μεγάλη ἐκκλησία, the Great Church, which is the common designation by Early Christian authors for a cathedral or principal church in a city.<sup>117</sup> Such an appellation was given to this church as early as A.D. 362.<sup>118</sup> Moreover, an inscription recorded by Malalas proves that it was originally built in honor of Christ.<sup>119</sup> The Syriac *Life* of St. Symeon Stylites, which was composed in the later fifth century, refers to the building also as a cathedral and contributes another important element to our understanding of the functions of the church. It reports that in 459 the body of the stylite Saint was taken to Antioch and "... into the great and holy church—which Constantine the victorious and just Emperor built, whose memory shall be blessed in both worlds—... it was placed, a thing which had happened to none of the saints, neither ancient or modern. For no one was ever put in the cathedral church, neither of the prophets nor of the apostles nor of the martyrs, excepting only the blessed Saint Simeon himself."<sup>120</sup> Thus, the Great Church was an episcopal church which received neither the body of a saint nor apparently any relics until the third quarter of the fifth century, and this is confirmed by further documentation. It bore no connotations as a martyrion and certainly was not originally intended as an imperial mausoleum as Grabar has asserted.<sup>121</sup>

Other functional aspects of the Great Church can also be established. John Chrysostom reports that in his day the church fed three thousand widows and virgins and cared for the indigent, the sick, pilgrims, and other visitors.<sup>122</sup> For these purposes the church was provided with adjacent *triklinia*.<sup>123</sup> When church councils were summoned to Antioch—often for the purpose of dealing with the Arian heresy—they usually met in the Great Church. When Alex-

<sup>116</sup> So Lassus, *Sanctuaires*, 109; I. Lavin, "The House of the Lord," *Art Bulletin*, 44 (1962), 20, 21 f.; and, most persuasively, Deichmann, "Oktogon," 40 ff., who rightly rejects the identification of the building as an imperial palace church, as proposed by Dynes, "Palace-Church Type," 1 ff.; also, more cautiously, Krautheimer, *Architecture*, 53 f. In my opinion, early Christian churches were not designed principally for the participation of the emperor and his retinue. That this was the original function of the church of S. Croce in Gerusalemme at Rome has not been firmly established: cf. Krautheimer, *Architecture*, 27. We know virtually nothing about the participation of the emperor in the ritual of the Church in the fourth and fifth centuries—indeed, our first reliable detailed source is the *Book of Ceremonies* of Constantine Porphyrogenitus. The imperial (or royal) palace church (or chapel) is a creation of the Middle Ages: J. Fleckenstein, *Die Hofkapelle der deutschen Könige*, Schriften der Monumenta Germaniae Historica, 16, 1 (Stuttgart, 1959).

<sup>117</sup> So John Chrysostom, Theodoret, Malalas, and the Arian church historian in Philostorgius: Downey, *History of Antioch*, 345, with references.

<sup>118</sup> Ammianus Marcellinus, XXII, xiii, 2, as adduced by Deichmann, "Oktogon," 48.

<sup>119</sup> Malalas, Bonn ed., 326; Downey, *History of Antioch*, 359; Deichmann, "Oktogon," 52 note 68.

<sup>120</sup> Translated from the Syriac by F. Lent, "The Life of St. Simeon Stylites," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 35 (1915), 196. Cf. H. Lietzmann and H. Hilgenfeld, *Das Leben des heiligen Symeon Stylites*, 134, Texte und Untersuchungen, 32, 4 (Leipzig, 1908), 178.

<sup>121</sup> Grabar, *Martyrium*, I, 221.

<sup>122</sup> *In Matth. hom.* LVI (LVII), 3 (PG, LVIII, col. 630).

<sup>123</sup> Zacharias Rhetor, *HE*, VII, 4, ed. and trans. E. W. Brooks, CSCO, LXXXVIII, *Scriptores Syri*, XLII (Louvain, 1953) (Latin trans.), 19. Cf. Michael Syrus, *Chronique*, IX, 24 (ed. Chabot, II, 207).

ander was elected to the episcopate of Antioch in 413, he restored John Chrysostom's name to the list of bishops whose names were recited during the Eucharistic service (it had been omitted from the list by Alexander's predecessor, Porphyrius), brought peace to Chrysostom's followers in Antioch and Syria, and restored better relations between the Patriarchate and Rome.<sup>124</sup> After succeeding in ending the Antiochene schism, Bishop Alexander celebrated the reunion by leading the previously opposed congregations in a united procession to the Great Church—an event which may have resulted in the designation *Homonoia* being attached to the church itself.<sup>125</sup>

In short, the Great Church at Antioch was built to function as the most important ecclesiastical foundation in the city. As such it served (after the middle of the fifth century) as the patriarchal church of *Oriens* and would have constituted naturally a model for other churches, which were under its direct ecclesiastical jurisdiction in Syria and Mesopotamia. This identification of their prototype may be submitted, whether or not Constantine's Great Church had the plan of an aisled tetraconch. Even if octagonal in form, it may have been adopted as their model by response to a common functional requirement. In reflecting their patriarchal mother church, the individual episcopal and metropolitan-diocesan churches presented the image of a united Church of Antioch in the fifth and sixth centuries.

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<sup>124</sup> Downey, *History of Antioch*, 457; and note 119 *supra*.

<sup>125</sup> W. Eltester, "Die Kirchen Antiochias im IV. Jahrhundert," *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 36 (1937), 258 note 30, followed by Deichmann, "Oktogon," 43f.